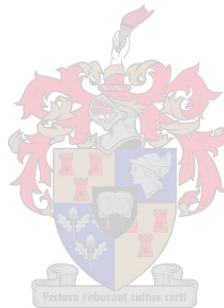


PERCEIVED CONTRIBUTING FACTORS IMPEDING JOB SATISFACTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

by

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DECLARATION

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SUMMARY

Despite repeated attempts by the South African government to increase retention of social workers, it is apparent there is seepage of attrition at various junctures, namely low output of graduates, emigration and exiting the profession for a career in the private sector. In order to successfully increase retention, it is essential to gain an understanding of the push and pull factors of retention and attrition within the profession, and specifically those that provide the essential service of working within the NGO sector. Thus, the overall objective of the study was to discover and unearth a detailed understanding of the perceived factors impeding job satisfaction among social workers, specifically pertaining to those working within the NGO sector.

The research approach was qualitative, positioned largely within the domain of an exploratory, phenomenological paradigm. An exploratory, descriptive design was utilised, as the variables of job satisfaction have been largely unexplored within the milieu of the South African social work setting.

A purposive, sampling technique was utilised and a total 20 participants were included in the study. A pilot study, which included 2 participants, was conducted. Data was collected through a semi-structured interview, audio recorded and transcribed. The sample was sourced from 5 organisations within the Roodepoort, Tshwane, Sasolburg and Kagiso areas.

Two literature chapters are presented, focusing on the generic theories of job satisfaction and subsequently placing these theories within the ambit of contributing factors to job satisfaction of social workers in South Africa, specifically those working primarily in the NGO child and family protection arena.

Chapter four included the presentation of the empirical study. Data was collated and analysed into themes, sub-themes and categories that followed on

from the findings of the literature study. Participant narratives were used to corroborate the main findings.

The findings showed that ultimately the concept of job satisfaction is a complex symbiotic relationship between situational, dispositional and social information processing factors. There is a significant interplay of positive and negative factors that play out against each other but often feed off each other. It was clear that a myriad of negative influences such as poor working conditions, large caseloads, poor remuneration, erratic and irregular supervision, lowly image of social workers play a significant role in antecedent factors to dissatisfaction within the workplace. However, despite the fact that South African social workers face the direst circumstances, many still obtain a level of satisfaction from helping others; profound satisfaction is obtained from a dispositional predilection towards a desire to help others. Compassion satisfaction remains a powerful and overarching contributor towards satisfaction within the workplace, but this can only be achieved if key role players make every effort to decrease the negative influences as much as possible.

Chapter five included the main conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations were varied but often highlighted the fact that often small, seemingly inconsequential actions could go a long way to increase job satisfaction levels among social workers and ultimately increase retention.

OPSOMMING

Ten spyte van herhaaldelike pogings deur die Suid Afrikaanse regering om retensie van maatskaplike werkers te verhoog, is dit duidelik dat daar steeds 'n uitvloei van werkkragte op verskeie vlakke plaasvind, naamlik deur middel van lae getalle graduandi, emigrasie en verlating van die professie vir 'n beroep in die privaatsektor. Ten einde retensie te verhoog, is dit noodsaaklik om te verstaan wat die suksesfaktore vir retensie (behoud) en die oorsake van die uitvloei van werkkragte in die beroep is, en spesifiek vir diegene wat noodsaaklike dienste lewer in nie-regeringsektore. Die doel van hierdie studie was dus daarop gemik om die faktore wat die grootste impak het op werksbevrediging van maatskaplike werkers, spesifiek diegene werksaam in nie-regeringsorganisasies, te verken en te beskryf.

Die navorsingstudie is kwalitatief van aard, grootliks gebaseer op 'n verkennende, fenomenologiese paradigma. 'n Verkennende en beskrywende navorsingsontwerp is gebruik, aangesien die veranderlikes van werksbevrediging hoofsaaklik onbekend is binne die milieu van Suid Afrikaanse maatskaplike werk.

'n Doelbewuste steekproefneming is gebruik en 20 deelnemers is ingesluit in die studie. 'n Loodsstudie, wat twee deelnemers ingesluit het, is gedoen. Inligting is ingewin deur middel van 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud wat met band opgeneem is, en daarna neergeskryf is. Die steekproef is verkry vanuit vyf nie-regeringsorganisasies in Roodepoort, Tswane, Sasolburg en Kagiso.

Twee literatuurhoofstukke het gefokus op generiese teorieë van werksbevrediging, waarna hierdie teorieë bespreek is binne die raamwerk van die bydraende faktore tot werksbevrediging vir maatskaplike werkers in Suid Afrika, spesifiek vir diegene werksaam in nie-regeringsorganisasies wat met kinder- en gesinsorg gemoeid is.

Hoofstuk vier fokus op die empiriese studie. Data is geanaliseer en in temas, sub-temas en kategorieë georganiseer, wat op die bevindinge van die literatuurstudie gebaseer is.

Die bevindinge dui daarop dat die konsep van werksbevrediging 'n komplekse, simbiotiese verhouding is tussen omstandighede, disposisionele en sosiale faktore. Daar is 'n beduidende interaksie tussen positiewe en negatiewe faktore wat in interaksie met mekaar is, maar wat ook van mekaar afhanklik is. Dit is duidelik dat talle negatiewe invloede soos swak werksomstandighede, groot gevalleladings, swak salarisse, ongereeelde en ongestruktureerde supervisie, en die swak openbare beeld van maatskaplike werkers 'n beduidende rol speel in die aanleidende faktore tot lae werksbevrediging. Ten spyte van die feit dat Suid Afrikaanse maatskaplike werkers hulself in uiters moeilike omstandighede bevind, is daar talle maatskaplike werkers wat weens hul ontfermende karakterseienskappe, steeds bevrediging vind daarin om ander te help. Empatiese bevrediging lewer steeds 'n belangrike en beduidende bydrae tot werksbevrediging, maar dit kan slegs bereik word wanneer sleutelrolspelers doelgerigte pogings aanwend om negatiewe werksfaktore sover moontlik te verminder.

Hoofstuk vyf fokus op die hoofgevolgtrekkings en aanbevelings. Die aanbevelings varieer, maar wys daarop dat klein aksies wat dikwels as onbelangrik beskou word, 'n groot bydrae kan lewer om werksbevrediging en uiteindelik retensie te verhoog.

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“I was waiting for the longest time, she said. I thought you forgot. It is hard to forget, I said, when there is such an empty space when you are gone”

Brian Andreas
- To all the social workers that gave me their time and opened up their hearts to me. You work tirelessly finding a voice for the voiceless in society; I hope in some small way this study will allow people to hear your voice!
“If all you do is make something beautiful for someone else, even if it's only for a moment, with a single word or small action, you have done a great service”

Iain S. Thomas
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRELIMINARY STUDY AND RATIONALE

The advent of democracy within South Africa metamorphosed social work as a profession. During the years of apartheid and white rule within the country, social work in South Africa was instituted, legitimated and sustained by the apartheid government to address the poor white problem (Earle, 2008:34). The white minority was afforded the lion's share of welfare benefits, both from a fiscal and manpower perspective. The black majority on the other hand was expected to rely on extended family and community support, with little or no state intervention (Mamphiswa & Noyoo, 2000:23).

Post 1994, the social work profession changed significantly; social workers were forerunners in the requirements of the new constitution — to “heal the divisions of the past” and “improve the quality of life for all citizens” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa no.108 of 1996:1243). However, despite a plethora of new citizens that were incorporated into the welfare system post 1994, the number of registered social workers in the country did not grow sufficiently to cater for the expanding population. In fact, it is abundantly clear that the number of registered social workers is woefully short of optimum levels. The South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) cited that at year-end, March 2012, there were 16 740 registered social workers in South Africa. However, 40% of these registered social workers are employed by the government, and 16% by Non Profit Organisations (NPOs). This indicates that the remaining 45% are either employed in the private sector or not practising. In a nutshell, South Africa currently has 9 374 social workers servicing a population of over 52 million (Statistics South Africa, 2014; Waters, 2013).

This significant shortage of social workers has detrimental effects on the output of services rendered. A social work shortage translates into higher caseloads for existing social workers, and ultimately undermines the effectiveness of welfare interventions. Due to this, recruitment and retention of social workers has become a significant focus of government as well as various stakeholders, and the issue of the scarcity of the skill has been commented on significantly in academic, government and media publications (Baldauf, 2007; Earle, 2008; Earle, 2009; Khumalo, 2009; Moloi, 2012; Waters, 2013).

1.1.1 Quantifying and contextualising the shortage of social workers

As previously mentioned, the claimed shortage of social workers has been well documented in academic texts. However, in order to quantify the exact shortage of social workers it is necessary to gain an understanding of the requirements of social work interventions unique to our population. According to Earle (2009), the Department of Social Development (DoSD) conducted a needs analysis in 2005 and proposed that an excess of 20 social workers per 100 000 of the general population is required. In fact, according to their transformation process a requirement of roughly 20 social workers (per 100 000) is required in urban areas, 22 (per 100 000) in peri-urban areas and 33 (per 100 000) in rural areas (Earle, 2009). Gauteng is the only province regarded as urban, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Western Cape are regarded as peri-urban and the balance of the provinces are regarded as rural. Calculating the present requirement according to the mid-year population estimates for 2013, it is suggested that 14 017 social workers are currently required within either the government or NGO sector (Earle, 2009; Statistics South Africa, 2013). This implies a current deficit of roughly 4 500 social workers.

However, it is believed by some that the shortage is greater than perceived if recent changes to legislation are taken into account. The Minister of Social

Development, Bathabile Dlamini, has indicated that 66 329 social workers are required to implement the Children's Act 38 of 2005 alone. A further 2 169 are needed to cover substance abuse and the Older Person's Act. Thus, a total of 68 498 social workers is currently needed in South Africa. Investigating these figures, the Democratic Alliance (DA) issued a statement in August 2013 that stated that there was a 77% shortage of social workers. This was calculated by taking the number of social workers registered and the number allegedly required for both developmental work and statutory work. However, considering the fact that 45% of those registered are not working in the government or NGO sector, the deficit is greater than stated, and in fact more in line with an 89% deficit or shortage of social workers (Earle 2008; Moloi, 2012; Waters, 2013).

From the above mentioned examples it is sufficiently clear that there is a shortage of social workers, however, it is imperative to create a narrative or understanding of the contributing factors relating to this shortage. Many theorists (Baldauf, 2007; Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001; Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2006; Kasiram, 2009; Reynecke, 2009; Viljoen 2009) postulate on possible antecedent causes to high turnover rates and significant shortages of qualified South African social workers. Despite the obvious political issues associated with the sudden and significant shortage of social workers, there are a number of other issues cited as contributors to low retention rates, namely:

- High levels of emigration of South African social workers;
- Low output of social work graduates;
- Low job satisfaction levels among social workers;
- Tenuous NGO and government relations;
- Change in legislative frameworks, as well as governmental plans and focus of welfare and;
- An onslaught of social ills, HIV/Aids, wide spread unemployment, familial effects of migrant labour, high crime rates and exposure to violence, domestic abuse, low levels of literacy, poor access to housing, sanitation and public health.

1.1.2 Setting the scene, why social workers leave?

Evidently there is more to the shortage of social workers than meets the eye. The outflow of social workers occurs at various different junctures: low output of social work graduates, high levels of emigration and exiting the field in favour of a new career. The reasons for turnover are varied but according to Tham (2007), the probabilities are that discontentment at the workplace emanates from a cycle beginning with perennial job dissatisfaction, followed by proactive intention to leave, and finally in most cases actual turnover (Tham, 2007:1228). Although not all authors agree on the correlation between job dissatisfaction and turnover, many theorists do believe there is a distinct relationship (Barak et al., 2001; Smith & Shields, 2013; Tham, 2007). The correlation between job dissatisfaction and turnover is highlighted in a meta-analysis of 25 articles conducted by Barak et al. (2001). The analysis was conducted in order to understand the antecedents to retention and turnover among social workers worldwide. According to Barak et al. (2001:631) job satisfaction is a key predictor of turnover behaviour; and it is clearly believed that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to quit.

If the presumption is then made that low job satisfaction is a significant antecedent contributor to turnover, what are the contributing factors to job satisfaction levels? Herzberg (1987) developed a theory of job satisfaction that consisted of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors of job satisfaction. The extrinsic factors related to organisational factors and the intrinsic factors related to internalised motivation (Smith & Shields, 2013). Extrinsic factors could thus be quantified as salary, supervision, organisational policies, working conditions and job structure. Intrinsic measures would be people's affective reactions to features integral to the work itself, for example autonomy and variety (Coffey, Dugdill, & Tattersall, 2004:742). This could also include factors such as praise, recognition and opportunities for advancement (Coffey et al., 2004; Smith & Shields, 2013).

Within the ambit of social work in particular, both intrinsic and extrinsic contributing factors to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction have been cited. Some of the claimed significant contributors are workload, working conditions, accomplishment - feeling you have helped others, workplace stress and anxiety, emotional exhaustion, secondary trauma, empathy exhaustion or burnout, poor professional image, lack of sufficient financial and verbal recognition, exposure to high levels of violence, few resources and support, supervision, autonomy and flexibility, peer relations and opportunities for advancement (Barak et al., 2001; Collins, 2008; Coyle, Edwards, Hannigan, Fothergill & Burnard, 2005; Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2006; Mandell et al., 2012; Smith & Shields, 2013; Tham, 2007; Vyas & Luk, 2010).

Taking into account the aforementioned contributing factors to job satisfaction, Vyas and Luk (2010) dissected social workers' satisfaction levels in relation to other professions, and the results presented worrying signs. Vyas and Luk (2010) reported on a research study conducted in the UK by Johnson, Cooper, Cartwright, Donald, Taylor & Millet (2005) which compared the experience of work related stress across 26 occupations. Looking at social workers, they had worse than average scores for physical well being, psychological well-being and job satisfaction, and an above average stress level compared to the other 25 occupations (Vyas & Luk, 2010:833). The overriding conclusion from this research was that the stress levels of social workers were higher than any other profession and double that of teachers (Vyas & Luk, 2010:833). Coffey et al. (2004) expanded upon this concept by indicating not only are social workers experiencing higher stress levels than other professions, but trended studies show that social workers' stress levels are increasing incrementally year-on-year, in all likelihood far outweighing the increase found in other professions (Coffey et al., 2004:744).

In South Africa, by all accounts, there are indications that challenges to job satisfaction are even greater than in developed nations. In point of fact, Earle

(2008:45) states, that many South African workers voice that they are “disheartened” and “just moving on from day to day”. Although job satisfaction and levels of attrition of social workers have not been well researched in the country, the issues have been commented on significantly in academic writings (Baldauf, 2007; Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2006; Kasiram, 2009; Reynecke, 2009; Viljoen, 2009; Waters, 2013). Although many contributing factors to deteriorating job satisfaction may be present in developed nations, they are probably not as prevalent or dire as in a developing nation such as South Africa. Specific mention, in relation to South Africa, has been made of high caseloads, low remuneration, poor professional image, lack of adequate supervision, limited career opportunities, poor working conditions and vicarious trauma of dealing with the emotional effects of violence and abuse, rife within South Africa (Baldauf, 2007; Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2006; Kasiram, 2009; Reynecke, 2009; Viljoen, 2009). In fact these concerns have been corroborated recently in a memorandum delivered to the Union Buildings on the 19th September 2016 by thousands of social workers and auxiliary social workers. The protestors detailed the torrid conditions under which they work, with specific mention being made of unsafe vehicles, lack of basic resources, lack of basic sanitation and poor salaries (Madibogo, 2016). The sentiments expressed were clear, the social workers in our country feel unheard and sidelined: “We are out there fighting for children’s rights and family rights everyday but no one hears us when we complain to our supervisors. It just goes unheard” (Madibogo, 2016:online).

To add to the woes of the South African social workers’ situation, there are reportedly extra-ordinarily high turnover rates within Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in particular. Government social workers earn significantly higher salaries and are afforded benefits that NGO social workers are not (Viljoen, 2009). This leads to significant movement of social workers from the NGO sector to the government sector when positions become available. Simultaneously NGOs find themselves in a position whereby they are partially funded by the government, and although the

funding is dependent on the amount of developmental social work conducted, they are still required to attend to statutory work placed on them at the behest of the government (Earle, 2008:25).

According to Earle (2008) the demands placed on social workers working in an NGO setting have increased dramatically over the past decade. The increased work is not only related to worsening socio-economic conditions, and increased social ills within the country, but also the increased strain placed on the NGO sector by obligatory statutory work overload. Statutory obligations have been placed on the NGO arena by the Government sector in order to fulfil government legislation, but no ancillary budget has been awarded to the NGOs for this work (Earle, 2008:25). This has reportedly at times led to hostile working relations between the two arms - the NGO sector and Government departments (Earle, 2008; Kasiram, 2009; Patel & Hochfeld, 2012; Pieterse, 2010; Viljoen, 2009).

The fact remains, that whether the social worker is working in a government department or an NGO, they are working within a country that is fraught with social ills; social workers are at the forefront of trying to improve the quality of life for previously disadvantaged and abused groups. The South African government has stated in their recruitment and retention strategy that it is essential to “determine conditions that impact negatively on social work services as well as to provide guidelines that will ensure the recruitment and retention of Social Workers within the profession and the country” (DoSD, 2009:3). The DoSD has also stated that it is essential to understand with some rigour and depth the issues that serve as predictive factors propelling the migration of social workers from the profession and the country (DoSD, 2009:3). Kasiram (2009), however, believes that although issues pertaining to low retention rates have been highlighted, the government has not been proactive in addressing the question of why social workers do not remain in the field. In order to have retention strategies that are sustainable and proactive, a greater understanding is needed of both extrinsic and intrinsic factors of job satisfaction within the social work realm. It is only with a deep

understanding of both the push and pull factors within the profession that retention can be addressed and increased.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite attempts by the South African government to increase retention of South African social workers, there is a significant exodus from the field at various junctures: low output of graduates, emigration, and exiting the profession for a career in the private sector (Baldauf, 2007; DoSD, 2009; Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2006; Kasiram, 2009; Reynecke, 2009; Viljoen 2009). High attrition rates are very specifically noted within NGOs (Baldauf, 2007; Earle, 2008; Reynecke, 2009). Many theorists agree that low job satisfaction is a significant antecedent contributor to turnover, indicating that there is a strong possibility that low job satisfaction levels are prevalent among South African social workers (Barak et al., 2001; Smith & Shields, 2013; Tham, 2007). In order to increase job satisfaction and ultimately increase retention, it is essential to gain insight into the impediments to job satisfaction among social workers, and specifically those working within the NGO sector. Thus, a detailed understanding of the perceived impediments to job satisfaction needs to be probed and interrogated, specifically pertaining to the drivers impeding job satisfaction within the NGO sector. This will answer the research question of what are the main impeding factors to job satisfaction among South African social workers?

1.3 GOAL OF THE RESEARCH

The goal of the research is to gain a better understanding of contributing factors creating impediments to job satisfaction of South African social workers within an NGO setting.

In order to achieve this goal the following objectives were devised:

- Contextualising, describing and interrogating generic job satisfaction theories.

- Analysing the theory and existing research relating to unique elements of job satisfaction among South African social workers based in an NGO setting
- Extrapolating information from the qualitative study to reveal key contributing factors impeding job satisfaction of South African social workers in an NGO setting.
- The final chapter will serve as an achievement of the final research objective, by offering conclusions and recommendations pertaining to antecedent factors to job satisfaction of South African social workers.

1.4 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

For the goal of this study the following concepts will be defined:

1.4.1 Job Satisfaction

The goal of this research is to gain an understanding of the impediments to job satisfaction, however it would be impossible to place this in context without a meticulous understanding of the concept of job satisfaction itself. According to Spector (1997:2), job satisfaction is defined simply as “how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of it”. Job satisfaction can be regarded as a global feeling about the job or as a response to varied aspects or facets of the job. In order to gauge a true reflection of job satisfaction, cognitive evaluation of the various facets of the job is required, as well as an emotional evaluation of the experiences within the workplace.

1.4.2 NGOs

A Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) is a non-profit organisation, indicating that profits, income generated or assets accumulated are not distributed or shared among its members. The only income generated by members or office bearers would be in the form of fair remuneration paid for services rendered (DoSD, 2011). An NGO performs an array of service and humanitarian functions, and has historically gained notoriety through

advocating for human rights and oppressed groups (Xaba, 2015:310). Although there are many forms of NGOs, for the purpose of this research, the researcher will be focussing on NGOs that render social services within the field of child welfare, child protection services and family services (Salamon & Anheier, 1996:7).

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Within this section the researcher will highlight the necessity of a sound literature review, as well as the proposed approach, design and methodology for the research.

1.5.1 Literature Review

According to Fouche & Delport (2012:109) the literature review sets the scene for the research project. Not only does the literature review provide the researcher with a good background knowledge of the topic at hand, it assures the reviewers that the researcher has grappled with and understood the main tenets and current issues related to his or her topic (Fouche & Delport, 2012:109). Simultaneously it allows the researcher to gather knowledge of how his or her project is similar or different to previous studies conducted. Mouton (2001:50) highlights this point further by stating the literature review is important from the perspective of not only obtaining results from previous studies but also to assess and observe the “different ways in which this phenomenon has been studied”.

Fouche & Delport (2012:109) also depict the literature review as important from the perspective that it fits the researcher’s project into the ambit of existing knowledge. Finally the literature review enables the researcher and reviewer to understand and conceptualise the variables that will be analysed within the study.

Within this study the researcher identified the body of literature on job satisfaction and professional experiences within an occupational setting.

The literature was analysed from a macro perspective and then related to the understandings of existing research and theory of the topic specifically in relation to social work. The literature review explored not only the concept of job satisfaction within social work, but also extrapolated the main factors impeding job satisfaction. Simultaneously the researcher was cognisant of the importance of highlighting the gaps and contradictions among existing research projects, and consequently applying this knowledge to remedy this in her project Fouche & Delport (2012).

The literature review enabled the researcher to gain a balance between deductive and inductive reasoning. The interrogation of the phenomenon enabled the researcher to gain a balance of deduction within the broadly based inductive framework of qualitative research. This is important within the process as extreme induction could narrow the researcher's perspective on the topic and ultimately deprive the researcher of grounded understandings of existing concepts and theoretical perspectives of the main tenet of the study (Hyde, 2000:88).

1.5.2 Research Approach

The research approach suitable for this study is a qualitative study grounded within a largely exploratory, phenomenological paradigm. Fouche & Delport (2012) depict the qualitative process as a method that is utilised in order to gain insight and understandings of complex phenomena. This approach is not used to measure frequency or to establish correlations between variables; it is rather an approach that offers the researcher a window into the participants' world. Thus the qualitative practitioner aimed to create a deeper understanding of processes from the participants' point of view. Although the research process has a specific focus the researcher takes a more holistic emergent view and allows concepts, ideas and understandings of the topic to emerge from the research process (Fouche & Delport, 2012:64).

This approach is deemed apt for this study, as the desired outcome of the research is to create narratives and explore perceived contributing factors and impediments to job satisfaction of social workers within an NGO setting. The researcher focussed on subjective exploration of the concept of job satisfaction and related experiences solely from perspective of the participant (Fouche & Delport, 2012).

1.5.3 Research Design

The study incorporated approaches from both an exploratory and a descriptive framework. An exploratory design enables the researcher to gain insight into a particular phenomenon or situation (Fouche & de Vos, 2012:95). This approach to research is deemed necessary if there is a lack of information about the topic, and it often used as a first stage of research. The descriptive approach explores but simultaneously attempts to describe factors in greater detail, expanding existing understandings of the topic (Fouche & de Vos, 2012:96).

An exploratory, descriptive design has been chosen within this study, as the variables of experiences within the workplace, and the subsequent effects on job satisfaction have been largely unexplored within the milieu of the South African social work setting. Thus the researcher hopes to illuminate factors relevant to job satisfaction among social workers (as well as the impediments thereof) whilst simultaneously broadening the knowledge of the topic, and allowing a comprehensive, in depth understanding of the subject matter.

1.5.4 Sample

A non-probability, purposive sampling technique was applied within this study. Non-probability samples are not representative of a particular group or population, and the size is not statistically determined. Purposive sampling is based “entirely on the judgement of the researcher, in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic,

representative or typical attributes of the population that serve the purpose of the study best” (Strydom & Delport, 2012:392).

The researcher chose this sampling technique as the participants were chosen from a specific subset in order to aptly interrogate the topic. The participants had to fulfil the criteria of working as social workers in an NGO setting, and therefore the sample was purposive in order to ensure the participants meet the parameters of the defined population.

Strydom & Delport (2012:392) convey that clear definitions and pre-selected parameters of the participants are of paramount importance.

The criteria for inclusion within this particular study:

- Social workers with a minimum of two years social work experience. The researcher has chosen more experienced social workers, those that are probably within the intermediate or advanced professional identity stage (Engelbrecht, 2014:131). This will eliminate the possibility of the results being skewed by role ambiguity and high anxiety levels related to lack of experience, prevalent among newly qualified social workers.
- Social workers currently working in a social services NGO setting, that is oriented towards child welfare, child protection or family services.
- Participants must reside in and work in South Africa.
- Proficiency in English (The participants need to be proficient in English as the researcher is not fluent in the other 10 official languages within South Africa).

The sample was made up of 20 participants, within 5 NGOs. The NGOs were based in Roodepoort, Sasolburg, Tshwane and Kagiso.

1.5.5 Method of Data Collection

Interviewing is the principal method of data collection within the qualitative research sphere. The interview is the creation of a relationship between interviewer and interviewee, designed to exchange information and illuminate the experiences of the participant to the researcher (Greef, 2012:342). The interview is meant to create a dialogue between researcher and participant that will bring their story to life, and to gather information from the participant's perspective.

The choice of interview is a semi-structured interview, defined as “those organised around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth” (Greef, 2012:348). The use of semi-structured interviews will be useful, as it allows the researcher to understand the complexity of the problem and gain insight into the personal, emotional elements. Similarly because it is semi-structured, the interviewee will be able to guide the researcher in possible areas that the researcher had not considered or was not aware of. “In this relationship, participants can be perceived as the expert on the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell their story” (Greef, 2012:352).

In a semi-structured interview the researcher formulates a flexible interview guide. This allows the researcher to formulate themes or big picture ideas of what is relevant within the specific arena, and to explore the best possible sequence for the relevant questions. However as Greef (2012) states, it is important to ensure that the researcher does not doggedly stick to the guide, but allows the interviewee control in terms of how they would like to answer and what they deem relevant to the issue. The researcher of course will decide how much deviation from the interview guide is acceptable (Greef, 2012:352).

Greef (2012) highlighted some possible challenges posed to the qualitative researcher:

- Researchers have to ensure that they are “inclusive and expansive when selecting individuals for interviews so that they can cover a range of perspective” (Greef, 2012:342). Thus it is important to ensure that the researcher chooses participants that will possibly vary in their viewpoint and open up different perspectives and arrays within the topic being researched. This would be emphasised by the option of sampling the participants from five different NGOs gaining a wider perspective in relation to the job satisfaction in an NGO setting.
- Developing interview skills that are sufficient to gain the trust of the interviewee and to ensure the optimisation of information gathering.
- Establishing a rapport sufficient enough to gain trust from the interviewee.
- Coping with unanticipated problems.
- Managing and recording large volumes of information
(Greef, 2012:342-343).

1.5.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small scale feasibility study “that comprises ‘small-scale versions of the planned study, trial runs of planned methods, or miniature versions of the anticipated research’ in order to ‘answer methodological questions and to guide the development of the research plan” (Kim, 2010:193). The primary reason for conducting a pilot study is to provide the researcher with a brief understanding of the research process and to make final adjustments and revisions to the interview guide. A pilot study was conducted on two participants; these interviews were not included in the main enquiry or study.

1.6 DATA PROCESSING PROCEDURE - QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative analysis is a process of turning data into meaningful findings, as Schurink et al. (2012:397) state it is “the process of bringing order, structure

and meaning to the mass of collected data.” This of course is similar to the quantitative study, but qualitative analysis diverges from its quantitative cousin in the way in which the findings are produced. The qualitative process evolves by “reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal” (Schurink et al., 2012:397).

Schurink et al. (2012:403-404) offer a flexible process for analysing qualitative data. They have divided the process into two stages, namely preparing and organising the data, and reducing the data:

- Preparing and Organising the Data
 - Planning for recording of data
 - Data collection and preliminary analyses
 - Managing the data
 - Reading and writing memos
- Reducing the Data
 - Generating categories and coding the data
 - Testing the emergent understandings and searching for alternative explanations
 - Interpreting and developing typologies.

Within the scope of this study the semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. In cases where the participant did not give permission for audio recordings, the researcher made notes during the interview.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers have two dominant categories of ethical responsibilities, first the responsibility to the participants in the study and secondly to the ‘discipline of science’ (Strydom, 2012:114). In order to show ethical considerations to the discipline of science, the researcher must ensure that

he/she attempts to report all interviews free and fairly without showing bias, does not under any circumstance fake interviews, and is not remunerated by an organisation where there could be a possible conflict of interest (Strydom, 2012:114).

Considering the participants within this study, the following ethical considerations were taken into account:

- Avoidance of harm: The participants were briefed clearly on the potential impact of the study. Similarly it was explained to participants that they had the ability to withdraw from the study at anytime.
- Voluntary participation: Participants were invited via a telephonic conversation to take part in the study. A detailed description of the study was described to them, and they were free to decide as to whether they are interested in participating in the study.
- Informed consent: Written informed consent was obtained from all the participants in the study. Included within this informed consent was a detailed explanation of the goal of the study and the proposed time frame and demands that would be placed on the participants. There was adequate opportunity for participants to obtain further information about the study as the need arises.
- Low Risk: The purpose of this study is not to explore deep personal issues but rather to delve into the practical experiences of contributing factors, as well as factors impeding job satisfaction within the social work sphere. Therefore this study was considered to be low risk in terms of ethical concerns.
- Confidentiality: The participant was assured that his or her identity will not be revealed to anyone other than the researcher. The researcher will not supply any psychographic or demographic information that could reveal the identity of a particular participant.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

De Vos et al. (2012) accentuate that it is imperative for the researcher to be aware of, and clearly present limitations to the study. Limitations to this study involved the fact that many of the existing research projects cited occurred outside the ambit of social work in South Africa. However, it was possible in many instances to correlate the impediments to job satisfaction among internationally based social workers, to indigenous impediments. Similarly, the few primary local research authors produced fruitful studies that were enormously beneficial.

The second limitation concerned the limited number of participants in the study. This could be a limitation regarding the validity of applying generalisation to the broader social work community. However purposive sampling allowed the researcher to provide a varied sample of participants, which created a rich and diverse set of narratives. Interestingly these narratives correlated well with the memorandum presented to the government in September 2016, which covered the concerns of thousands of social workers regarding their working conditions (Madibogo, 2016a).

1.9 PRESENTATION

The research is made up of several chapters. Chapter one offered an introduction to the topic, an overview of the defined problem statement, and described the aims, objectives and methodology utilised within the research study. The two chapters that followed presented the literature review. This contextualised, described and interrogated generic job satisfaction theories, as well as analysed the theory and existing research relating to unique elements of job satisfaction, and impediments to job satisfaction, among South African social workers based in an NGO setting.

Chapter four extrapolated information from the qualitative study to reveal key contributing factors impeding job satisfaction of South African social workers in an NGO setting. And finally chapter five served as an

achievement of the final research objective by offering conclusions and recommendations pertaining to antecedent factors to job satisfaction of South African social workers.

CHAPTER TWO

JOB SATISFACTION: A THEORETICAL REVIEW

“Regardless of whether a person considers his or her job a source of unremitting drudgery, acute frustration, or deep, (even spiritual) fulfilment, it seems that job satisfaction is among the most important attitudes a person holds” (Judge, Hulin & Dalal, 2009:54).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

South African social workers are employed within a country that is fraught with social ills and economic strife. The political history of South Africa adds complexity to the existing challenges that a developing economy faces, with many citizens harbouring emotional scars from a violent and tumultuous society. Social workers are tasked with being the front-runners of improving the quality of life for previously disadvantaged and abused groups and despite the desperate need for social work intervention in our society; we are faced with a significant shortage of registered social workers (Earle, 2008; Moloi, 2012; Waters, 2013).

Despite attempts by the South African government to increase retention of South African social workers, there is still a significant professional exodus from the field at various junctures (Baldauf, 2007; DoSD, 2009; Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2006; Kasiram, 2009; Reynecke, 2009; Viljoen 2009). It is thus essential to understand with some rigour and depth the issues that serve as predictive factors propelling the migration of social workers from the profession (DoSD, 2009:3). It is only with a deep understanding of both positive and negative contributing antecedent factors to job satisfaction within the social work arena, that retention can be addressed and increased.

In order to understand the contributing factors to social work retention, a comprehensive understanding of appropriate theories pertaining to job satisfaction and employee retention is required. It is necessary to offer a sound definition of job satisfaction, followed by a detailed overview of dominant psychological theories of job satisfaction from an industrial or organisational standpoint. Dominant theories that may elucidate job satisfaction within the social work arena have been chosen and interrogated within this chapter.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF JOB SATISFACTION

Working adults spend the majority of their waking time at the workplace; feelings and thoughts generated within the working environment affect individuals both at the workplace and away from it (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Judge & Church, 2000). Not only does work have a knock-on effect in the arena of personal relations, but also work is simultaneously a key element of a person's identity and description of who they are. According to Du Plessis (1992), work plays a significant, validating role in people's lives; it confirms their inclusion in society, and the perception that they are participating members of the community. However, du Plessis goes on to state that the function of work is not merely a form of self or collective identification, but rather taps into a deeper significance associated with human development. Consequently, work has the ability to provide positive experiences and opportunities for significant psychosocial growth, however this may be the opposite for many workers, and in fact may have a detrimental effect on the person's psyche and human development (du Plessis, 1991:199).

Accordingly, taking into account the overarching influence that job satisfaction has on our lives, it is hardly surprising that job satisfaction may be the most researched and widely commented part of Industrial or Organisational Psychology (Judge & Church, 2000). Yet, despite the myriad of articles and books on job satisfaction, finding a common definition agreed

upon by the major theoretical players is at times challenging. Edwin Locke, a seminal figure in the arena of job satisfaction, has according to Brief and Weiss (2002), presented the most influential definition of job satisfaction. He defined it as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (Brief & Weiss, 2002:282).

Spector (1997:2) refined the definition offered by Locke by simply stating job satisfaction can be interpreted as “how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of it.” Spector maintains job satisfaction can be regarded as a global feeling about the job or as specific facets or aspects of the job. Spector has identified a list of facets of job satisfaction that he believes are relevant to testing or understanding the phenomenon. They are listed as appreciation, communication, co-workers, fringe benefits, job conditions, the nature of the work itself, organisation itself, organisation policies and procedures, pay, personal growth, promotion opportunities, recognition, security, and supervision (Spector, 1997:3).

Fisher (2000) levelled some criticism towards job satisfaction theorists similar to Spector. She stated that despite the fact that job satisfaction is primarily defined as an affective or emotive response to a work situation, in many instances it is broken down into facet areas that are then measured “largely as a cognitive evaluation of job features” (Fisher, 2000:185). Fisher refers to Sandelands (1988), who points out that the majority of measures of “work attitudes assess ‘cold cognitions’ rather than hot emotions, the level at which the job is actually experienced” (Fisher, 2000:186). This indicates the strong possibility that job satisfaction is evaluated as a logical deductive score of facets of a job with little or no exploration of the affective or emotive elements. The importance of the point raised by Fisher has far reaching consequences for measurement of job satisfaction. In order for the standardised tests to be both valid and reliable, they essentially have to measure satisfaction according to the overarching definition of the phenomenon. Brief and Weiss (2002:284) sum up this concern and expand this argument by stating that we can no longer tolerate academic literature

that define “job satisfaction in one way (affectively) and blindly measure it another (cognitively).”

Thus although Brief and Weiss (2002) believe the importance of measuring affect is understated by most job theorists, neuroscience research indicates that affect may in fact play a more dominant role than even Brief and Weiss anticipated. It is no longer believed that cognition and affect function separately, and have a transitory influential relationship with one another; it is now believed that cognition and affect have a complex neurologically symbiotic relationship (Damasio, 2008; Gladwell, 2005; Johnston & Olson, 2015). It is proposed, through a surplus of neurological studies, that affective states influence even the “highest cognitive functions” (Johnston & Olson, 2015:Chapter 9). So how does this relationship influence the workplace?

There are two ways in which this symbiotic relationship between affect and cognition challenges traditional job design theories. First of all it challenges the notion of how much information we gather from our surrounding workplace that is interpreted on a cognitive level. Secondly it challenges the precept that our discernment of our circumstances whether it is job satisfaction, or overall evaluation of the workplace, is based on cognitive processes that involve logic and deduction with a resultant behavioural outcome (Damasio, 2008; George, 2009; Gladwell, 2005).

George (2009) implies that traditional organisational theories are incorrect in their presumption that members of organisations respond to various aspects of their jobs (including evaluation of their satisfaction levels) with considered and deliberate forethought. Thus, although, all forms of job design are presumed to be the product of “conscious will and logical thought processes” (George, 2009:1319), this notion is challenged by a ground swell of research that intimates our emotions are the core and primary source for our behaviour and conscious thoughts. The majority of our behaviour is actually driven behind the scenes in a nonconscious manner, highlighted by

Wegner and Wheatley (1999:490) who voice the idea that, “believing that our conscious thoughts cause our actions is an error based on the illusory experience of will.”

George (2009:1319) emphasises the importance of creating an ideological mindset shift in terms of our understanding of organisational behaviour. She articulates that extensive evidence points to the notion of automaticity of human functioning; nonconscious thoughts and feelings play a central and crucial role in decision making in the workplace. Given this evidence George puts forward the argument that, “the time has come for organisational scholars to question their implicit assumption of organizational behaviour as predominantly consciously willed behaviour” (George, 2009:1319).

The product of nonconscious thought patterns is further highlighted through a concept called ‘thin slicing’ or neuroeconomics (Damasio, 2008; George, 2009; Gladwell, 2005; Johnston & Olson, 2015). The idea behind the hypothesis is that people are generally bombarded with constant sensory input, making it impossible to deal with this enormous amount of information on a cognitive level. George (2009:1326) emphasises the point by stating that “for each second that a human being is awake, the five senses are processing more than 11,000,000 bits of information in receptor cells that are linked to the brain via nerves,” when it is in fact believed that consciousness can only process a maximum of 40 bits of information. The processes of the brain are so complex that it can’t pry apart all of the information to create a cognitive deduction and thus the only way this can quickly be spelt out to the consciousness is through a gut feeling or emotion (Damasio, 2008; George, 2009; Gladwell, 2005; Johnston & Olson, 2015). Consequently, ensuring measurement of affect or emotion is essential within the spectrum of job satisfaction, as only assessing cognitive factors would exclude a wide variety of complex indicators.

Gladwell (2005), offers an example of the complexity of decision making in the workplace: he refers to an account by Gary Klein, a decision-making

expert. During his studies, Klein recalled an account of fire fighters that were called to a seemingly routine call out. A fire had broken out in a one-storey residence in a city in America. The fire fighters arrived on the scene, forced their way into the house and began dousing the kitchen flames with water; the fire should have subsided but it didn't. At that point the fire lieutenant was confronted with an overwhelming feeling of dread and immediately forced all of his fire fighters to exit the scene immediately. Moments later it was reported that the floor on which they were standing collapsed. Both the fire lieutenant and the fire fighters attributed his premonition to some form of spiritual protection. However Klein believed this was a prime example of thin slicing, he probed all the incidents preceding the collapse of the floor and came to the following sequential conclusion: The fire actually emanated from the basement not the kitchen, and thus the fire chief was able to thin slice and nonconsciously be aware of this by understanding following factors:

- The fire was far hotter than a kitchen fire would normally have been.
- The fire did not response to water as kitchen fires would normally do.
- Despite the fire being hot it was abnormally quiet, which didn't make sense given the amount of heat generated.
- The living room floor was sweltering, giving an indication that the fire emanated from below the living room – the basement.
- The heat of the living room floor alerted the fire lieutenant to the fact that the floor may in fact be hot enough to collapse.

All of these factors nonconsciously created a pattern. "At the time, though, the lieutenant made none of those connections consciously. All his thinking was going on behind the locked door of his unconscious" (Gladwell, 2005:123).

Although the above-mentioned example is not necessarily about job satisfaction, it is about achievement in the workplace, which ultimately goes hand-in-hand with satisfaction. The example highlights the necessity of acknowledging the crucial role that emotions play in decision-making in the workplace; in fact it is a perfect illustration of the nonconscious mind in

action. The neurological workings of the fire lieutenant's brain ensured that the nonconscious brain found patterns and clues in the situation that he was unconsciously able to match up to existing and extensive knowledge of the behaviour of fires (George, 2009). In essence, the fire lieutenant's brain functioned as a computer that calculated risks instantaneously and found a pattern in the chaos (Gladwell, 2005:123). This flies in the face of what was previously believed; that affect or feeling is post cognitive, intimating that emotion was only experienced after a cognitive and logical deductive analysis of the surroundings (Muncy, 1986). It has previously been erroneously believed that environmental factors were thoroughly investigated cognitively, which then resulted in a feeling or emotion associated with the interrogation, and finally a resultant behaviour would ensue. Clearly the latest neurological research contradicts this; and resultantly, it has become imperative for organizational psychologists to question the assumption that behaviour and satisfaction within the workplace is a well thought through, logical, sequential conscious judgment of circumstances, or whether it is in fact a complex neurological array of nonconscious feelings, emotions and judgements. In fact George (2009:1321) states, "an extensive and growing body of literature suggests that work behaviour as consciously willed behaviour may be the exception rather than the norm."

To sum up, it is believed that emotions, feelings or affect felt within the workplace offer a deep understanding of complex neurological processes that are just too vast to understand consciously (Damasio, 2008; George, 2009; Gladwell, 2005; Johnston & Olson, 2015; Muncy, 1986). Although at times these emotions can be explained post cognitively, often decision making and evaluation at the workplace is guided by the unconscious and people are not cognisant of why they have the beliefs they do, or in fact, why they are acting in the manner they do (George, 2009). The neurological processes are just too vast to make sense of consciously, forcing people to offer explanations thereof, which are in all honesty far too complex to summarise (Gladwell, 2005). Thus, it is not in any way implying that

cognitive facets of job satisfaction are not worth exploring – of course they are essential, but emotive research taken at face value, without further interrogation, should also be an accepted tool for measurement or evaluation of job characteristics.

Taking cognisance of the above-mentioned critiques, there is a great deal of evidence that suggests the affective dimension should be incorporated more fluidly into the definition and construct of job satisfaction. Although Judge, Hulin & Dalal (2009) did not touch on the notion of the role that affect plays in deeper neurological processes, they did acknowledge the significant role that affect plays in job satisfaction. They describe job satisfaction as multidimensional psychological responses to one's job, depicting these responses as comprising a triad of cognitive (evaluative), affective (emotional) and behavioural elements. According to Judge & Klinger (2008:394), this tripartite abstraction fits well with theories of social attitudes.

The aforementioned debates indicate that there is clear dissonance between the definition of the concept of job satisfaction, and the ability of academia to aptly understand and measure the concept accurately (Locke, 1969; Brief & Weiss, 2002; Fisher, 2000; Judge, Hulin & Dalal, 2009). Locke depicted this concept clearly by reminding researchers that the first question of research should not be how the concept can be measured, but rather to delve into a detailed question of what the concept actually is (Locke, 1969:334). Bearing this in mind, the researcher will now look at the dominant theories related to antecedent factors of job satisfaction, and how these theories will fit into the tripartite definition of cognitive, affective and behavioural factors of job satisfaction.

2.3 THEORIES RELATING TO JOB SATISFACTION

Theoretical conceptualisations of the antecedents to job satisfaction can be loosely categorised into the following theoretical frameworks: situational

theories, dispositional theories and interactive theories (Cohrs, Abele & Dette, 2006; Judge et al., 2001; Judge & Klinger, 2008; Redmond, 2014). However, social processing will also be appended as a separate theory (Redmond, 2014; Thomas & Griffin, 1983). Although some authors group social processing theories within the ambit of situational theories (Judge et al., 2001) there are some that believe there is enough diversion and uniqueness for it to be classed as a separate group of antecedent theories (Redmond, 2014).

1. Situational theories postulate that satisfaction is extrapolated purely from the working environment; either the nature of the work or the ethos of the organisation itself, determines levels of job satisfaction (Judge & Klinger, 2008; Redmond, 2014).
2. Dispositional theories take the stance that job satisfaction stems from the personality and aspects of the individual and their personal capacity for satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Judge & Klinger, 2008; Redmond, 2014).
3. Social Information Processing theory intimates that employees draw their attitudes and feelings about job satisfaction from their co-workers. The belief is that employees will look to their peers and other co-workers to make sense of the environment (Redmond, 2014).
4. Finally, the interactive theory holds the belief that job satisfaction results from the interaction of both environmental, as well as individual or personality factors (Judge & Klinger, 2008:398-399).

The different theories will now be explored in more detail.

2.3.1 Situational Theories

As mentioned in the previous section, situational theories relate directly to the conditions of the workplace and how they may determine levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction within the workplace. The situational theories that have garnered the most research support are Job Characteristics Model

and Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (Judge et al., 2001; Judge & Klinger, 2008).

Herzberg Two Factor Theory postulates that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not two ends of the same continuum; factors that contribute to job satisfaction are different to contributors to job dissatisfaction. Thus, the absence of factors that increase job satisfaction would not purely be responsible for job dissatisfaction and vice versa.

Herzberg developed his theory after a battery of interviews with workers in the 1960s. He asked the interviewees to consider times when they were particularly satisfied in their careers. In response to this, those interviewed spoke specifically about what Herzberg termed intrinsic factors, inner drivers that contributed to achievement, motivation and success within the workplace. Herzberg terms these factors as motivators. Conversely when the interviewees were asked to name contributing factors to job dissatisfaction they named more extrinsic factors, namely remuneration, working conditions, company policies. Herzberg named these factors as hygiene factors. Herzberg believed that by improving hygiene factors within a workplace, this could ensure decreased dissatisfaction but would not conversely lead to satisfaction. Satisfaction would only be found if internal motivators such as interest and personal reward and achievement were in place (Basset-Jones & Lloyd, 2005; Judge et al. 2001; Smith & Shields, 2013).

Herzberg's Two Factor theory is described as having "intuitive appeal" (Judge et al. 2001: 28), however, despite this, there have been numerous concerns over the validity of the theory. Numerous studies have attempted to recreate and test Herzberg's original findings; however there has been diminutive success with this endeavour (Judge et al. 2001:28). Subsequent studies have shown that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Job Characteristics Model, another theory within the ambit of situational factors, will now be discussed.

Job Characteristic Model, developed by Hackman & Oldman (Judge & Klinger 2008:399), has a dominant premise that there are five core motivating factors that are intrinsic to job satisfaction. They are **task identity** (the degree to which the employee is involved in the task process from beginning to end), **task significance** (how important and significant the work is perceived to be), **skill variety**, **autonomy** and **feedback** (Judge & Klinger 2008:399). Furthermore, within the ambit of this theory there is belief that the five core motivating factors lead to three psychological states: experienced meaningfulness being found in the work done, responsibility for outcomes and knowledge of the results. These psychological states ultimately contribute to the outcomes of increased job satisfaction and job performance (Judge et al., 2001; Judge & Klinger, 2008).

One of the critiques of the theory is the age-old query of cause and effect, as Judge et al. (2001:29) state “the relationship between perceptions of job characteristics and job satisfaction appears to be bi-directional”, indicating that it cannot be assumed that job characteristics are entirely causal of job satisfaction. George (2009:1320) too, levels criticism of the theory by reminding readers that not all of the variance in perceptions of job satisfaction can be explained objectively, that unconscious emotive drivers may in fact play a more significant role than what is objectively or consciously realised.

Despite criticisms, Judge & Klinger (2008:400) believe there is enough research to indicate that there is both direct and indirect validity within this theory. However, in later years Hackman and Oldman (1976) changed the focus of the theory from a purely situational one, to a slightly more inclusive approach. They stated that two people could have similar work related experiences, share the same core characteristics at work, and yet have varying job satisfaction levels. In order to accommodate this anomaly, they added the concept of the employee’s personal desire to achieve or attain personal development, and the role this played within the ambit of job

satisfaction (Judge & Klinger 2008:400). In essence, the theorists began to acknowledge the role that disposition plays in job satisfaction; this will now be explored.

2.3.2 Dispositional Theories

The dispositional approach hints that some people may be predisposed to either higher or lower job satisfaction levels, irrespective of the working environment or the nature of the job itself. To place this notion into perspective research indicates that life satisfaction and job satisfaction have clear correlates between the two, and in all likelihood, there is a bi-directional correlation between job satisfaction and life satisfaction (Judge & Klinger, 2008; Redmond, 2014).

Dispositional theorists, however go one step further, indicating that life satisfaction precedes job satisfaction, and in many cases is a sound predictor of levels of job satisfaction. Simply put, dispositional theorists believe internal disposition determines the predilection of people to be either satisfied or dissatisfied with their work, irrespective of the working conditions or the nature of the job (Redmond, 2014).

There are two broad areas of dispositional theories; simply stated they are based on indirect and direct studies of the dispositional influences on job satisfaction (Judge et al. 2001). Indirect studies attempt to theorise and rationalise the role that disposition plays in job satisfaction by inference. Thus although personality traits are not measured, they are inferred to exist, and believed ultimately to have an influence on job satisfaction. So, for example, Staw and Ross (1985) found that measures of job satisfaction tend to be relatively stable over time, even when individuals have changed jobs, and, in the same vein, the strongest predictor of current job satisfaction appeared to be previous job satisfaction levels. On a further note, Arvey, Bouchard, Segal & Abraham (1989) found that monozygotic twins reared apart appeared to have similar job satisfaction levels irrespective of

differences in their career paths or place of work (Judge & Klinger, 2008:401). Although these studies obviously pique interest into dispositional influences, they cannot, with validity, demonstrate that solely disposition would have an influence on job satisfaction longitudinally. However, direct studies of disposition attempt to relate “a direct measure of a construct purported to assess a personality trait to job satisfaction” (Judge et al., 2001:30). Although the traits or variables measured across studies were diverse, the study that gained the most traction in academia is the group of studies that observed the role of negative affectivity (NA) and positive affectivity (PA) on job satisfaction. As reported by Judge et al. (2001:30) PA refers to an overall positive disposition characterized by enthusiasm, positive engagement and high energy, whereas nervousness or high levels of anxiety, withdrawal or distress depict NA. Numerous studies attest to the notion that individuals with a tendency toward NA have significantly lower job satisfaction levels, and conversely those associated with higher PA have significantly higher job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2001; Judge & Klinger, 2008).

However, one of the concerns about the definitions of PA and NA, is that it tends to typecast people into either end of the spectrum, alluding to the fact that positive and negative affect are completely unrelated or disparate. Judge & Hulin (1993) point to studies, which have shown that the independence of negative and positive affectivity depended significantly on the measurement used. Drawing from some of the above-mentioned criticisms the construct of core self-evaluation was developed. Core self-evaluations covered perceptions that individuals hold about themselves in relation to: self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control and neuroticism or emotional stability. Further research in this regard showed high correlation with self-evaluation and job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2001). However, the age-old criticism of interrelatedness comes to the fore. It is likely that someone who is more satisfied at work would feel increased self-esteem and offer enhanced self-evaluations.

Despite advancements made in relating disposition to job satisfaction, there is still a need for further interrogation. As Judge et al. (2001:31) state, dispositional research has been criticized for its inability to clearly define or measure affective disposition, and although new approaches have been utilised, this criticism is probably still relevant.

Despite the obvious concerns regarding the definition of disposition, there is no doubt that at some level disposition must play some role in satisfaction within the workplace. What is also important to question is the role of personal relations within the workplace and how this could influence job satisfaction and be influenced by disposition. The influence of relationships with colleagues and management, and the ability of social factors to influence job satisfaction, will be further examined in the following section.

2.3.3 Social Information Processing Theory

According to Redmond (2014), the social information processing theory is based loosely on Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory, but was encapsulated by theorists Salancik and Pfeffer in 1977 (Thomas & Griffin, 1983). The premise of the theory is that workers' levels of satisfaction, and emphasis on task importance, are driven significantly by attitudes of both co-workers and supervisors/leaders. Simply put, the negativity or positivity of co-workers and/or supervisors has a significant effect on the level of satisfaction of the individual worker.

Social information processing theorists infer that employees "do not perceive and react to an objective workplace reality" (Thomas & Griffin, 1983:672), but instead that their realities are partially constructed or determined by social interactions and information (written, verbal and non-verbal) within the workplace.

Thomas & Griffin (1983:672) highlight four basic philosophies of the theory:

1. The individual worker is swayed by others in his/her overarching descriptions or perceptions of the overall work environment.
2. Secondly, the social environment in the workplace has an influence on the perceived importance of specific factors of the work environment. For example, the individual may be guided in his/her perception as to whether autonomy is preferential or exceeds pay in terms of importance.
3. Thirdly, social interactions within the workplace will provide information on how all the contributing correlates or dimensions of job satisfaction are ranked and ordered
4. Finally, it is deemed that the individual's affective reaction to the workplace will be influenced by the social context and the overall evaluation of others along the positive and negative affective spectrum.

Previous research referenced by Morrison (2007), has highlighted physiological reactions to contagion of emotions within the organisational setting. "Contagion occurs through a process of mirroring in which emotions spread amongst people who are in proximity to each other, leading to not only a sharing of mood, but also to an alignment of body posture and even heart rates" (Morrison, 2007:257). Thomas & Griffin (1983) reviewed 10 studies that tested the voracity of the social processing theory. Projects were conducted to test whether an individual's belief about their job or aspects of the job was, in fact, pliable or malleable through the influence of others at the workplace (Redmond, 2014; Thomas & Griffin, 1983). An example of one of those projects involved participating subjects who were required to watch videos that either showed assembly line workers making derogatory or complimentary statements about their jobs. The subjects exposed to the videos that had a positive bias, showed far more task and job fulfilment than the group exposed to negative inferences (Redmond, 2014; Thomas & Griffin, 1983:674). Similar experiments allude to the control that subliminal cues hold to subjects.

Berridge & Winkielman (2003:188) attest to the powerful role that sublimation has on decision-making. The researchers depict experiments

related to a subject's drinking behaviour based purely on subliminal exposure to facial expressions. Exposure to happy facial expressions resulted in subjects pouring 50% more of a fruit juice than those exposed to neutral expressions. Conversely subjects exposed to angry expression poured and consumed less fruit juice than those exposed to neutral expressions. What was important is that the subjects reported no conscious awareness of their "subjective emotion even when asked before receiving the drink" Berridge & Winkielman (2003:188). Although these experiments were not conducted within the workplace, it does relate to prior mentioned theories by George (2009) who highlights the importance of organisational specialists questioning the role of complex neurological processes, and their role in complex decision-making within the ambit of work. She reminds us that individuals within the workplace are not necessarily aware of how emotions have a strong influence on behaviour and decision-making within the workplace.

According to Thomas & Griffin (1983) distinct methodologies, utilising different methods of information sharing, have concurred that there is no doubt social information does play a role in shaping, to a greater or lesser degree, employee perceptions and satisfaction with job related tasks. Many organisations world-wide do take this notion seriously; in fact Redmond (2014) cites a German IT company that has not only frowned upon workers discussing issues of complaints in the workplace, but have forced employees to sign a contract stating they would not complain to their fellow co-workers. In fact some employees have been fired for what was termed excessive whining.

However, not all theorists are as taken with the theory as the German IT company; in fact there have been varied critiques of the theory. Thomas & Griffin (1983) question the simplicity of the theory and ask an important question of how an individual takes a dominant perspective when they are confronted with conflicting cues or views from fellow workers. They point out that obviously not all workers have the same views of a particular task or

part of an organisation and cues will range from “moderately inconsistent to completely contradictory in nature” (Thomas & Griffin, 1983:650).

Similarly personality traits, and cultural sensitivities should have some influence on the theory. As Thomas & Griffin (1983) point out, where do dogmatism and authoritarianism fit in? Certain personalities are more easily influenced than others. Judge et al. (2001) point out that cross culturally there may be significant differences. Some societies or cultures demand more respect for authority figures, and therefore should ultimately present a greater force of influence. However, Judge et al (2001) point out that the veracity of this premise is questioned, as similar job attributes cross culturally are more likely to predict job satisfaction, regardless of the values, social and work related environments.

Finally as Thomas & Griffin (1983) point out, there is little known about the effects of social information processing over time. It is clear from research conducted (Redmond, 2014; Morrison, 2007; Thomas & Griffin, 1983) that in the short term cues may influence the perspective of the worker, but is this short lived or is there a longer term effect on the worker?

Perhaps it is more an indication of further research and interrogation needed than outright dismissal of the theory. It is also possible that the issues at hand are the interrelatedness of this theory, with other work related factors, as well as an interplay of personality and cultural issues.

The next theoretical standpoint that will be discussed is the interactive theory, which in essence depicts the interaction of dispositional and situational factors.

2.3.4 Interactive Theories

The most acknowledged theories within this group are Locke’s Value-Percept Theory (Judge & Klinger 2008) and the Cornell Model (Judge et al.

2001). Locke, in his Value-Percept Theory argued that individual's unique value sets would drive job satisfaction. Thus, Locke described the theory in the presentation of a formula:

$$S = (V2 - P) \times V1$$

Where S= satisfaction, V2 = value content or amount wanted, P is perceived amount of value sourced from the job and finally V1 is the importance placed upon the value that is unique to the individual, or in other words:

$$\text{Satisfaction} = (\text{want} - \text{have}) \times \text{importance.}$$

Thus, the Value-Percept Theory “predicts that discrepancies between what is desired and what is received are dissatisfying only if the job facet is important to the individual” (Judge & Klinger, 2008:400). Within this theory various facets of job satisfaction are analysed within the formula and then aggregated to obtain an overall view of job satisfaction.

Judge & Klinger (2008), believe that this theory draws strength from the fact that it places emphasis on the role of the individual in both values and the unique importance placed on preferring particular job outcomes. However, the criticism levelled against the theory is that it is very likely that what an individual values “what one desires (V1 or want) and what one considers important (V2 or importance) are likely to be highly correlated” (Judge & Klinger, 2008:400).

The Cornell theory, on the other hand, argues that job satisfaction is a function of inputs versus outputs. What the individual worker puts into the job, signified by factors such as training, experience, time and effort, needs to be balanced by role outcomes, depicted by pay, status, working conditions and intrinsic factors. According to Judge et al. (2001:31), the crux of the theory is that the more outcomes afforded to the worker relative to their “inputs invested”, the higher the job satisfaction level. According to this theory external or macro factors may also have a significant effect on the ultimate role of satisfaction. For example, a professional that has chosen a career that is in high demand, or is low in labour supply will perceive their

inputs to be more valuable than others. Or in times of high unemployment the individual will perceive their chances of finding alternate employment slim and may in fact perceive their inputs as less valuable. Thus macro economic factors such as supply and demand, unemployment, government legislation and growth may ultimately influence the individual's perception of job satisfaction.

The theory also indicates that the individual's perceptions of previous experience with outcomes will also influence their presupposed analysis of the outcomes of current experiences.

Judge et al. (2001:31) acknowledge that the "breadth and interrogation" of the theory is extraordinary, however they believe that valid tests are lacking, and more research is needed if the theory is to gain more academic respect.

2.3.5 Synchronicity of the different theories

Within this chapter, key theories believed to be pertinent to the field of social work, have been utilised to explain the antecedent factors associated to job satisfaction. Although the overview may give the impression that these theories are competing or incongruent, this is not necessarily true (Judge & Klinger, 2008:403). Dispositional approaches indicate that those with overall positive dispositions would be more likely to be content in the workplace, or to gain more intrinsic value from their jobs. However, Judge, Bono, and Locke (2000) indicate that those with positive core self evaluations are more inclined to obtain complex and challenging jobs. The authors go on to indicate that it is generally accepted that the more challenging, the more intrinsically rewarding the job. Thus, the cycle and correlation in their opinion are clear: positive self-evaluations lead to more enriching and rewarding environment, which ultimately contribute to increased job satisfaction and more favourable self-evaluation (Judge & Klinger 2008:403).

In fact, Feldman (1988), as cited in Mathieu, Hofmann & Farr, (1993:371), claims that it is a moot point to try to establish which theory is dominant, as they are reciprocally related. It is believed that all the theories hold water; and that disposition, job characteristics, social processing information all interact together to form job satisfaction. This should then ultimately be measured in a tripartite fashion: the interplay of cognition, affect and behaviour (Judge & Klinger, 2008). Similarly looking at the interplay of the nonconscious factors and how subliminal factors may in fact have deep reaching influences on job design and satisfaction, without the individual even being aware of them, also indicates that job satisfaction cannot and should not be analysed in a unidirectional manner.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an overview of the contradictory definitions of the concept of job satisfaction, as well as highlighting and interrogating the appropriate theories relating to the understanding of job satisfaction. Similarly the prevalent role of hidden emotions, and the interplay between cognition and affect has been explored within the ambit of job satisfaction.

The following chapter will synchronize with the four dominant theoretical concepts explored within this chapter, and will set the scene for the interrogation of the perceived impediments to job satisfaction within the social work milieu. Identified antecedent factors, within the social work sphere, will be slotted into these four dominant categories. This will be examined within the direct context of an NGO in South Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXTUALISING JOB SATISFACTION WITHIN THE AMBIT OF SOCIAL WORK IN AN NGO SETTING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

South African social workers deal with vicarious trauma, violence, abuse, and economic strife that make their work both stressful and challenging. These contributing factors are perceived to be responsible for antecedent factors to high attrition rates among social workers. Although these contributing factors to attrition are mentioned often in academic text in South Africa, this information is reliant on only a handful of research projects and much anecdotal evidence (Baldauf, 2007; DoSD, 2009; Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2006; Kasiram, 2009; Reynecke, 2009; Viljoen 2009). Data pertaining to the average number of years that a South African social worker stays in the field is scarce. However, research conducted in Britain indicates that the expected career span of a social worker averages at 7,7 years (Curtis et al., 2010:1636). Taking into account poor remuneration and adverse working conditions prevalent within the welfare system in South African, it is likely that the expected career span of an average South African social worker may even be lower.

Factors that contribute to an exodus within the field are often discussed, yet the reasons for people staying within the career are less known, but possibly as important as the former. This lends itself to a unique interpretation of the possible factors that influence the social worker in relation to job satisfaction. Negative contributing factors to job satisfaction obviously need to be explored but a simultaneous and vital analysis of rewarding and positive contributing factors within the profession also needs to be interrogated.

Scrutinizing and understanding the work experiences of social workers within the NGO sector in particular, is crucial to the survival of the welfare system in South Africa. The NGO sector is an integral part of grass roots welfare intervention within the country through which essential statutory services are offered, specifically within the child and family welfare arena. Social workers, working within the NGO sector are faced with distinctive challenges not necessarily germane to the government sector (Earle, 2008).

The aim of this chapter is to interpret the unique challenges that South African social workers within an NGO setting, are exposed to, and the resultant effect on job satisfaction. This chapter will tie in with the previous chapter, which interpreted antecedent factors pertaining to job satisfaction within the domain of the four dominant theories.

The diagram below depicts the four dominant theoretical positions that will be utilised to describe antecedent factors to job satisfaction among social workers in South Africa, namely situational, dispositional, social information processing and interactive theories (Judge et al., 2001; Judge & Kilnger, 2008; Redmond, 2014; Thomas & Griffin, 1983;). The circular arrow depicts both the reciprocal relationship between the four dominant theories, as well as the reciprocal relationship between the triad of cognition, affect and

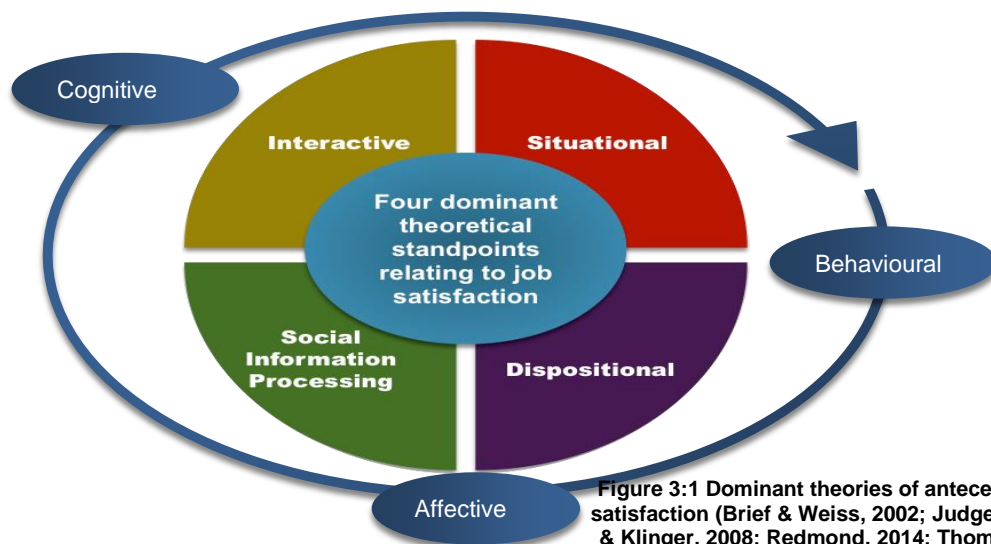


Figure 3:1 Dominant theories of antecedent factors to job satisfaction (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Judge et al., 2001; Judge & Klinger, 2008; Redmond, 2014; Thomas & Griffin, 1983)

behaviour; the three ways in which job satisfaction is expressed (Brief and Weiss, 2002).

Thus, this chapter will highlight key factors within the ambit of each of the four dominant theoretical standpoints that are unique to social workers. The analysis will be based chiefly within the South African context, but global examples will be incorporated where it is believed general tendencies exist. The area that will be interrogated first will be situational factors that influence the social work field in relation to job satisfaction.

3.2 SITUATIONAL FACTORS

A short recapitulation from the previous chapter asserts that situational theories hypothesise that satisfaction is extrapolated purely from the working environment; either through the nature of the work or the ethos of the organisation itself, which then determines levels of job satisfaction (Judge & Klinger, 2008; Redmond, 2014). Situational factors unique to social workers that contribute to job satisfaction, are working conditions, remuneration, workload, opportunities for promotion and stress or burnout. These concepts will be explored in more detail.

3.2.1 Working conditions

South Africa is a country fraught with social ills and as a result welfare agencies are often overwhelmed, overburdened and financially under resourced. A number of authors draw attention to the fact that South African social workers are confronted with on-going lack of basic resources such as adequate and clean office space, office furniture, stationery, computers, technical assistance and reliable vehicles (Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2006; Naidoo & Kasiram, 2006). Not only has this been mentioned in academic text, but also reference was made of inadequate resources by the thousands of social workers that marched to the Union Buildings to present a memorandum to government, in September 2016. The social workers made mention of lack of basic resources such as insufficient and unroadworthy vehicles, stationery shortages, inadequate office equipment and office

space, in some cases mention was made of a lack of basic sanitation at work premises (Madibogo, 2016).

Social workers working within rural areas are likely to experience these factors on an even more intensive level. This is accentuated through an excerpt from an interview with two social workers, working in Limpopo province. "This one computer, we share between all six people ... The photocopy machine is not working. I don't even get a pen – I have to buy my own....My colleague across the way waited almost two years for a table and a chair! ... [yet] despite the problems, this office is not bad. In the Giyani sub-district office, they do not even have a telephone – they have to walk or drive two kilometres to even make a call!" (Earle, 2008:32).

Despite the challenges faced by social workers *in situ*, venturing out for home visits, presents unique occupational health and safety challenges. As highlighted by the DoSD (2009), the social worker is often required to drive long distances in vehicles that are habitually unreliable, on roads that are in poor condition. Earle (2008) alludes to the notion that this is even more severe in NGO settings. Limited financial resources result in poorly maintained vehicles and an incredibly small pool of vehicles, requiring the car to be shared by many of the social workers. Limited access to reliable transport impinges upon the output offered to the clients, but also places the social worker at undue risk. The welfare agencies do not have the financial or manpower resources to mitigate the jeopardy social workers are placed in and as a result the safety of the social worker is often compromised (DoSD, 2009: 40).

To add fuel to fire, social workers are not only confronted with a lack of physical resources but a real fear of lack of safety. This is not only a phenomenon that is prevalent among South African social workers; in reality, this is a global problem. Balloch, Pahl & McLean (1998:340) refer to a 1998 episode of a BBC documentary where it was highlighted that proportionately more social workers than police had been murdered on active duty in England and Wales in the three years prior to the documentary

being aired. Of course this represents the extreme case of violence, however the possibility of exposure to violence when working with marginalised groups is significant, and heightened within South Africa where we have acutely high incidents of violence and specifically gender based violence (DoSD, 2009:40).

It is proposed that social workers in training are not given enough pedagogic preparation for dealing with violent and abusive altercations. This lack of preparation ultimately creates more vulnerability for social workers (Orton, 2007; Tully, Kropf & Price, 1993). Perpetuating the cycle is the perceived lack of managerial support, and specifically in the case of South Africa, perceived lack of support from both a political and judicial perspective (Balloch et al., 1998; Kasiram, 2009). Feeling isolated and unsupported result in social workers being disinclined to report incidents of abuse as they resultantly apportion blame to themselves (Balloch et al., 1998).

Thus to sum up, although it has been established that poor working conditions such as limited financial resources at the work place and exposure to 'at risk' groups and possibly even violent and abusive altercations, is not limited to South African social workers, this country does seem to represent the extreme. By all accounts NGO settings have even greater challenges than government departments and are often exposed to higher risk factors and poorer working conditions (Earle, 2008). In essence the NGO sector represents the extreme of the extreme. Engelbrecht (2006) however, points out that this is not the only area where we represent the outermost end of the continuum, in fact he believes that low remuneration offered to South African social workers shows significant disparity when compared to other countries, this will now be discussed below.

3.2.2 Remuneration

According to Smith & Shields (2013:194) satisfactory pay is no doubt a "statistically significant predictor of job satisfaction." Of course, a myriad of

negative factors within a job would not be negated purely by increased salary; however there is no doubt that remuneration is a contributing factor to a sense of self worth and job satisfaction. Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge (2008) discuss the belief that self-consistency theory implies that remuneration will play a role in personal judgement of self-worth. The authors cite that due to the fact that society reveres economic achievement, it is likely that higher economic achievement should ultimately result in increased self-worth (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008).

This will obviously have far reaching implications for social workers, but specifically for South African social workers, where salaries are notoriously low. Kasiram (2009:647) points to studies that indicate being paid a fair and equitable remuneration package was a significant contributor to job satisfaction among South African social workers. Ultimately low remuneration levels offered to South African social workers contribute to high attrition rates of social work students, high emigration rates of South African social workers, as well as overall exiting of the social work field for more lucrative paying careers (DoSD, 2009; Earle, 2009; Engelbrecht, 2006; Kasiram, 2009; Orton, 2007).

Earle depicts drop out rates of social work students ranging from 30 to 75 percent. She describes the reasons for this to be influenced largely by students' awareness of the low remuneration within the field (Earle, 2008). A final year student quoted by Orton depicts these concerns: "Money is a worry for me and is therefore significant for the social work profession. In South Africa, social workers make very little money. In fact, I could make the equivalent of my starting salary working as a waitress" (Orton, 2007:148).

Engelbrecht (2006) and Kasiram (2009), both point to the notion that although social work salaries are notoriously low globally, South Africa represents the extreme, and this clearly contributes to the continued exodus of South African social workers to better paying regions. An empirical study conducted by Firth (2004), indicates that the average package for a British

social worker was £24 000 per annum, whilst the average South African social worker was earning in the region of £2 850 per annum (Firth, 2004).

Although remuneration of social workers is an issue across the board, the situation is more ominous within the NGO sector (Earle, 2009; Hendriks, 2004; Malherbe & Viljoen, 2009). It is reported that Department of Social Development social workers earn on average close to 40% more than NGO sector social workers (Viljoen, 2009). Earle expands upon this by stating that the Department of Social Development prioritised the re-grading of social worker salaries in an attempt to eventually be reflective of a four year professional degree, however this re-grading was not expanded to include the NGO sector. This has according to Earle (2009) resulted in a massive salary disparity between government-employed social workers and NGO based social workers. The large salary differential has been exacerbated by the provision of fringe benefits such as “medical aid, pensions, housing subsidies and car allowances” which are “virtually non-existent for social workers in the NGO sector” (Earle, 2009:66).

In addition to this, it is reported that salaries differ across provinces, constraining the placement and retention of rural based NGO social workers even further. Earle emphasizes this by offering an example of a Child Welfare organization in Mpumalanga that had a turnover of social work staff of 178% in 2005 and 156% in 2006 (Earle, 2009:61). Rural NGO offices are often unable to fill posts for months as the majority of social workers opt to work within the government sector. When posts are filled in the NGO sector it is often newly qualified social workers who require many hours of training and guidance before they are able to function effectively in the role. “It is a continuous training process, once they are trained, it usually takes about six months before they leave to work for the Government” (Viljoen, 2009) .

The NGO sector is currently motivating for complete recompense parity between NGO social workers and the government social workers. The sound argument made by the NGO sector is that services they deliver are

conducted at the behest of the Department of Social Development, and social workers within the NGO sector are in fact doing the same work. Consequently there is no clear reason for lack of enforcement of pay equality (Viljoen, 2009). The income disparity has had far reaching effects on clients and those in need of welfare intervention. There appears to be a prevalent paucity of black social workers within the NGO sector, due to the inability of the NGO sector to retain the highly sought after equity candidates. Government reportedly poaches black social workers in order to fill equity quotas, and with added remuneration and benefits, few refuse the unique opportunity (Earle 2008). This obviously has considerable effects on clients, as a fully representative demographic staff complement is necessary for effective implementation of social welfare interventions.

Clearly the poor remuneration across the profession and in particular within the NGO sector has dire ramifications for the delivery of welfare services. However, Engelbrecht (2006) warns that although an equitable remuneration is an important factor in retention, it should not be deemed as the panacea. Engelbrecht highlights that a multi-pronged approach should be utilised with financial compensation being a contributing factor, but not the only factor: "if the only right thing in a person's job is their salary, there is no assurance that they will stay" (Engelbrecht, 2006:133).

In the same vein, the South African Department of Social Development, in their drive to attract and retrain more social workers, recommend that creative non-monetary incentives be utilised in lieu of increased remuneration. The list included additional leave days (for example a long weekend every month), sabbaticals (for example offering 3 months off for every third year), job rotation, bonuses linked to either retention or project completion and bursary schemes (DoSD, 2009). These incentives, although they may not necessarily translate into higher economic status, do convey a clear message of appreciation, which may ultimately lead to increased job satisfaction. Similarly Westbrook, Ellis & Ellett (2008), in their study on improving retention of childcare social workers in America, noted that a

temporary respite from the emotional strain of social work might go a longer way in terms of increasing satisfaction than merely economic incentives. This could be done by increased leave days as suggested by the DoSD (2009) or, as suggested by Westbrook et al., (2008) by increasing movement within the agency allowing the social worker to have a brief respite from intensive emotional work to possibly project work or less emotionally draining labour (Westbrook et al., 2008:52). Engelbrecht (2006) points to the notion that one of the possible advantages of working in the field could be greater flexibility, which allows for maximal work-life balance, which is often sought after among workers that have dependants or young families.

Finding unique and creative ways to establish non-monetary incentives may in fact be easier with smaller organisations such as NGOs. NGOs are considered to be more amenable to listening to the needs of the disenfranchised and thus may present a unique opportunity to be innovative and experimental in terms of creating non-monetary, yet rewarding incentives for social workers. Smaller organisations such as these may also be able to create staff driven and researched incentives that larger organisations may have difficulty implementing due to bureaucratic procedures.

A fair and market related wage is vital. However, there is no doubt that non-monetary incentives could go a long way in terms of increasing satisfaction specifically within the social work group, as studies show they are less likely than other professions to value work on the basis of purely salary, but place greater emphasis on the opportunity or ability to help the public (Smith & Shields, 2013:189). Smith & Shields (2013) discuss the intrinsic value that is obtained by those in the helping professions. However this value and feeling of doing good is often negated by heavy workloads that ultimately lead to feelings of being ineffectual and unproductive. The notion of voluminous workloads placed on South African social workers will now be explored.

3.2.3 Workload

Excessive workloads are believed to start a chain reaction that ultimately leads to feelings of depersonalisation and lack of accomplishment. Burdensome caseloads and extensive administrative duties inhibit the lengthy process of creating emotional bonds with clients, leading to feelings of lack of personal accomplishment on the part of the social worker. Ultimately this creates the knock-on effect of lowered resilience, increased emotional exhaustion and lowered job satisfaction (Coyle et al., 2005; Mcfadden, 2013; Munro, 2010; NCCD, 2006; Trevithick, 2014; Westbrook et al., 2008).

Research conducted in the United States among child protection social workers, indicates the most cited reason for social workers leaving their jobs was “feeling like work was never done” followed closely by “heavy caseloads” (NCoCD, 2006:8). In the same study over a third of the social workers that had left their employment stated they would have remained in their job, had management made attempts to ensure their workload be decreased (NCoCD, 2006:8). This cycle of attrition exacerbates the matter of work overload, as the remaining social workers (who are already burdened with unattainable requirements in relation to caseloads) must now take responsibility of extra cases, during the process of recruitment and training of new staff (Westbrook et al. 2008:39).

In South Africa, the workload of social workers appears to be in the extreme, but specifically within the NGO sector. Baldauf (2007) reports that at Roodepoort Child Welfare, a social worker has between 110 and 400 cases. Narsee (2013) comments further that South African child protection social workers dealing with foster care could in fact be responsible for as many as 500 cases. This occurs despite the fact that controlling bodies recommend that a social worker should not have a caseload in excess of 60 cases (Earle, 2008). This has obvious psycho-legal implications; huge caseloads prevent the social worker from attending to urgent cases timeously. This ultimately puts the client at further risk of violence and abuse, and when intervention

does occur, the social worker is not able to give the necessary time and focus to ensure a quality intervention. Thus, although the social worker has legal and ethical responsibilities to deal with cases of abuse timeously, it is physically impossible to give sufficient time when the social worker is stretched over hundreds of cases (Baldauf, 2007; Earle, 2008; Kasiram, 2009; Narsee, 2013).

Although case overload is extreme in South Africa, it is a common occurrence globally. Research among child protection workers in the States portrayed the acute frustration of the overburdened social worker. As one social worker stated “There are too many families to do any good for them” (NCoCD, 2006:11). There is a distinct belief that high caseloads are merely setting the social worker up for failure (NCoCD, 2006:11). This acute frustration is described by a social worker “It’s my personal greatest dissatisfaction that I can’t do anything well because I’m rushed around and making mistakes in organising things” (Mickel 2009).

Added to this, social workers often have little or no clerical support, resulting in them being forced to stretch themselves even further: “Social workers have become typists. As well as doing, say, highly detailed work on children in care, they are booking taxis, typing up the notes for meetings and sending them out” (Mickel 2009: online). Many authors have referred to the stress that role ambiguity brings into the array in the workplace. Being unsure of expectations, conflicting demands, being expected to conduct tasks that are not directly related to the professional role are just some of the issues related to role ambiguity. Balloch et al. (1998) showed that stress related to role ambiguity was experienced by half of the social workers interviewed within the United Kingdom. This role ambiguity relating to the constant requirement of social workers to participate in non-professional tasks deprives them of personal and job related growth, affect their ability to function effectively in their role as social worker, ultimately increasing stress levels and decreasing job satisfaction (DoDS, 2009; Coyle et al., 2005).

Trevithick places this in a neurological perspective as well as a psychological viewpoint. She points out that being burdened by heavy caseloads and conducting non-professional related tasks can ultimately result in decreased time spent doing purely social work related activities. This has far reaching neurological consequences as she states “brain cells that are not used, and do not ‘fire’, can fall away and wither” (Trevithick, 2014:303). Thus if social workers do not continuously work on purely social work tasks, it may be more serious than just ‘getting out of practice’, neurological changes may occur. The social worker needs to feel challenged and have feelings of accomplishment, accompanied by the opportunity for advancement, promotion and specialisation. Many believe these are areas that need intense focus within the milieu of South African welfare organisations (Earle, 2008).

3.2.4 Opportunities for promotion and specialisation

Redmond (2014) proposes that advancement in a career is a crucial ingredient to job satisfaction. It is imperative that employees who exhibit skill, advancement and dedication be rewarded with the opportunity to move up the career ladder (Redmond, 2014). It is widely commented both locally and globally, that social work is one of the few professions whereby there is little opportunity for advancement and career growth (Earle, 2008; Mickel, 2009; NCCD, 2006; Westbrooke et al., 2008). This was accentuated by a study conducted in America; average salaries for specific degrees were calculated, this was then correlated with estimations of the growth in salary after obtaining a postgraduate qualification. Social work was classed as one of the careers most likely to show little or no return on investment after obtaining a Masters degree, as salary increases after obtaining the postgraduate qualification are minimal (Smith, 2011). Although this research was conducted within America it appears to be apropos to the South Africa situation.

Concerns regarding social work and lack of upward mobility are relevant across the board in South Africa, but it is clear the situation is calamitous within the NGO sector. “The scope for promotion and related salary increases is extremely limited within most NGOs, with senior managers earning not much more than entry-level personnel” (Earle, 2008:30). Even if a social worker is awarded a senior position, funding limitations do not allow the opportunities for an increased salary (Earle 2009). The following statement highlights this sentiment: “I am a social worker, and worked for NGOs for 2 years. I hold a Masters degree and earned the same salary as a newly qualified social worker. There is no support for further study, no flexible hours for personal or professional development” (Viljoen, 2009:online). Although some believe this phenomena is prevalent across many helping professions (Smith, 2001), Mickel (2009) holds the viewpoint that this is not the case, as health and education are prime examples of where it is possible to climb the professional ladder.

Within South Africa, there appear to be unique factors that influence the relationship between attrition and lack of advancement. Legislation within South Africa that encourages appointments of those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, and the expectation of participation in community upliftment projects on the part of large corporations, has added an extra complication to the attrition rate of social workers. Earle (2008) states that in South Africa, social workers are quite sought after in the private sector to fill the role of human resources or corporate social responsibility managers, and “black social workers with postgraduate qualifications are particularly mobile” (Earle, 2008:148). Thus many social workers opt to leave the profession to obtain the recognition and advancement that they so sorely crave, and are unable to obtain within the ambit of social work, due to the lack of ‘upward mobility’ (Earle, 2008:148) within the profession. It is clear, the profound lack of congruity between experience and the opportunity to be stimulated and challenged in a more senior role, results in acute frustration, and ultimately significant attrition and movement into alternate careers.

The movement out of the field of social work may in fact be largely related to few opportunities to earn more. Although the link between upward mobility and increased remuneration is palpable, this is not the only consideration with regard to personal advancement. The NCCD conducted research in USA, which clearly showed that child welfare social workers, in particular, believe the lack of opportunity for advancement equated to low support or recognition for their dedication and hard work (NCCD, 2006:4).

The lack of an impetus for social work specialisation is clearly a game changer within the context of retention. According to Earle (2008), specialisation is believed to be instrumental in gaining confidence, increasing productivity, and ultimately reducing stress. Earle does point out that opinions differ in terms of specialisation. Some experts believe that social workers should have generic skills that are transferable across all interventions. However, others argue that specialisation is a natural progression in all professions, and within the domain of social work would be beneficial to both the social worker and clients. It is also argued by some that taking on the three streams of casework, group work and community work; results in statutory work taking precedence, at the expense of preventative work (Earle, 2008: 147-8). Thus, it is believed by some commentators that specialisation in all likelihood would result in greater self-belief, feelings of accomplishment and ultimately increased job satisfaction, and decreased stress levels. The profound impact of stress related work experiences is significant within the South African situation, yet few South African studies have made it a priority. The researcher will explore global studies that look at this phenomenon, and attempt to contextualise it within the South African socio-economic climate.

3.2.5 Stress

According to research conducted in Sweden, 91 percent of social workers described their jobs as both emotionally and physically stressful (Tham,

2007). In fact social workers recorded the highest level of claimed stress among any professional group investigated (Tham, 2007; Vyas & Luk, 2010:833). Coffey et al. (2004) expanded upon this concept by indicating that trended studies show that social workers' stress levels are increasing incrementally year-on-year, in all likelihood far outweighing the increase found in other professions (Coffey et al., 2004:744).

High stress levels are linked to lower job satisfaction levels and eventually higher attrition rates. Many studies have pointed to the notion that creating interventions to combat worker stress would ultimately go a long way in improving retention of social workers. All these studies identified stress as a factor contributing to staff turnover and concluded that tackling occupational stress would be an effective way of improving staff retention (Curtis et al., 2010; Hussein et al., 2013).

The next section, which includes social processing factors such co-worker support and supervision, offer some options that may go a long way in reducing stress levels of social workers.

3.3 SOCIAL INFORMATION PROCESSING FACTORS

Social Information Processing Theory intimates that employees draw their attitudes and feelings about job satisfaction from people in or associated to their workplace. Within the ambit of social work, the researcher will now explore the social processing component of colleague relationships and co-worker support, the importance of supervision, the collective image of social work, and the influence macro attitudes may have on social work job satisfaction.

3.3.1 Co-worker support

Although little data is available on this concept among South African social workers, in particular, Collins reports that research conducted in Northern

Ireland indicated that peer interaction and colleague support among social workers, accounted for the most consequential contributor to sustained coping strategies. In the USA, it was reported that social support among peers and co-workers was a significant buffer against workplace stress and burnout, conversely low support was indicative of higher levels of stress and burnout (Collins, 2008:1181). Collins went on further to cite that co-workers and support groups not only played a significant role in minimising the effects of burnout but also significantly improved job satisfaction (Collins, 2008:1182).

It is believed that workers' groups (both formal and informal) in a welfare organisation provided the role of building consensus, they help "members articulate agency demands, enabled them to be clearer about explicit and implicit rules and role conflict issues - encouraging movement towards resolution of these issues, while clarifying the workers' own sense of role and mission" (Collins, 2008:1182-3). What is of great interest to a multi-cultural country such as South Africa is that Morrison describes the ability of co-worker groups to reduce discrimination and inter-racial hostility when co-workers are able to share commonalities (Morrison, 2007:257). This would obviously be beneficial to the individual social worker, organisational dynamics, as well as broader anti-discriminatory social work practices.

3.3.2. Supervision

Numerous studies have advocated for further impetus with regard to supervision, as this appears to be a crucial ingredient to sustained and increased job satisfaction. On-going, healthy supervision showed significant spikes in increased satisfaction and decreased turnover among social workers (Barak et al., 2008; Collins, 2008; Farmer, 2011; NCCD, 2006; Smith & Shields, 2013; Tham, 2007; Westbrook et al., 2008). The aforementioned studies show that little or no supervision, or a poor relationship with a supervisor, was a significant antecedent factor to turnover. Redpath, Gill, Finlay, Brennan & Hakkennes (2015:215),

emphasise the above mentioned points by reiterating that in fact it is believed that the supervisor-supervisee relationship is the “most important workplace relationship; it affects the supervisee’s emotions, attitudes, motivations, behaviours, health and work- place retention.”

Although supervision is imperative, quality supervision is essential to ensure benefits are reaped from the relationship. Westbrooke et al. (2008) comment that numerous studies have linked the efficacy or quality of the supervision process to retention outcomes. According to the authors, effective supervision includes offering praise, highlighting key strengths of the social worker, being a good listener, being sensitive to the unique emotional experiences of the worker, being understanding to the demands and responsibilities placed upon the worker (Westbrook et al., 2008). Similarly, the supervisor also needs a sound knowledge of the process and procedures of the organisation (Westbrook et al., 2008).

The opportunities for learning from the supervision process are great but the effects of poor or no supervision are palpable. Engelbrecht (2010) stresses that low supervision creates a spiral; it begins with less time available for supervision, leading to higher attrition rates, ultimately higher caseloads for remaining social workers, then subsequently even less available time for supervision as the supervisor is overwhelmed with attending to practical needs within the organisation. Some of the comments made by supervisors in Engelbrecht’s study highlight the desperate situation, “never mind supervision and everything else...I have to keep the work going” and “supervision is the last thing on my mind” (Engelbrecht, 2010:329). The spiral does not end here; Engelbrecht (2010) points out, the supervisor is confronted with feelings of guilt for not giving employees enough supervision time, and they ultimately become overwhelmed themselves. “I also need support, but got nobody to turn to – I’m on the edge of a breakdown” (Engelbrecht, 2010:332). When supervisors themselves are stressed and burnt-out, they would obviously find it difficult to offer quality supervision to junior staff.

Although supervision is commonly associated with entry-level social workers, there are considerable benefits to supervision at all experience levels. According to the developmental approach, the process of supervision continues irrespective of the experience of the social worker, albeit in a different form or frequency (Engelbrecht, 2014). Quality supervision creates professional development through learnt procedures, but it also allows the worker to identify their key strengths. As these strengths are highlighted and encouraged, increased satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment develop, ultimately improving job satisfaction (Farmer, 2011:2). Supervision should act not only as a 'shock-absorber' for the emotional demands of the job, but also to remind the worker of the relevance and importance of the work they are conducting (Collins, 2008).

Trevithick expands the debate on supervision by considering neurological influencers; neuroscientists have now established "the greater the emotional arousal, the greater the learning that is achieved and remembered" (Trevithick, 2014:305). Trevithick notes that this has "profound implications for social work" (Trevithick, 2014:305), as it presents a unique learning opportunity that could be garnered through the intense emotional nature of the work, and the supervision relationship presents a unique opportunity to make use of this emotional learning.

Further to Trevithick's points, a ground swell of neurological research indicates that the majority of our behaviour is actually driven behind the scenes in a nonconscious manner (Damasio, 2008; George, 2009; Gladwell, 2005; Johnston & Olson, 2015). Trevithick notes the emotional link between supervisor and supervisee is to an extent influenced by non-verbal behaviours such as (but not limited to) facial expressions, even fleeting expression or micro expressions (Ekman, 2007). Included in the non-verbal array is: verbal tone, mannerisms and specific timing and potency of reactions or responses (Trevithick, 2014). Thus, it is possible that seemingly arbitrary non-verbal cues are interpreted nonconsciously and

then may drive the direction of the relationship between participants. For example if a supervisor gives a fleeting facial expression of disdain, this may be internalised as a form of rejection and may impede the learning process and openness within supervision. Further interrogation of this particular area is sorely needed within the social work context. Nevertheless, even though the information on this is scant, it is clear, the supervisor needs an element of intuition by understanding how the process of the intervention is being internalised, and altering the intervention subtly for optimal learning (Engelbrecht, 2010). This will involve awareness of non-verbal cues from both parties.

It is apparent, from the numerous authors cited, (Barak et al., 2008; Collins, 2008; Farmer, 2011; NCCD, 2006; Smith & Shields, 2013; Tham, 2007; Westbrook et al., 2008) the benefits of supervision are significant to the social worker, the client and the organisation at large. The question, however remains, why is supervision not being implemented with the vigour that it should be? The main cause of lowered supervisor availability is attributable to budgetary constraints. Although this is a global phenomenon it is even more prevalent in South Africa where both funding and manpower are limited in welfare organisations, specifically the NGO sector, where budgetary constraints are preponderant (Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2010).

In conclusion, the supervision relationship is not only complex, but also extremely important to the sound running of any welfare of the organisation. However, in practicality, budgetary constraints and excessive workload hinder the process of quality supervision in many areas within South Africa. This ultimately leads to a lower quality service being offered to those in need, and a poorer image of social work collectively.

3.3.3. Image of social work

Just as social processing theories depict the importance of beliefs and attitudes of colleagues and managers in defining, or at least influencing, job

satisfaction, so it is important to look at the collective perceptions of the profession at large, and how this could have an influence on social workers. Earle (2008) believes that collectively social work has a very pitiable image. The reason she believes: social workers are the advocates for the poor and marginalised groups in society. “Many do not want to hear the voice of the poor and thus side-line those who represent them” (Earle, 2008:14).

Earle observes that the poor image of social work may also be associated to the remnants of the historical roots of the career, where it was deemed a calling, with the sole intent of the upliftment of mankind, not personal financial benefit (Earle, 2008:16). It appears as if the two concepts have irrationally been misconstrued as mutually exclusive, exacerbating the social workers’ belief that they are not deserving of respect, decent working conditions or a decent wage. This notion of acquiescing to lowering standards is depicted in a quote from a final year social work student: “You have to settle for less. If you’re going to be a social worker forever you must just settle for less. People don’t validate what you do, they don’t understand it” (Orton, 2007:149).

Kasiram (2009) notes participative management, and education needs to ensure that social workers are empowered to assert themselves and do not remain passive participants. Kasiram makes a valid point with regard to education; it is probable that the perception of social work being a second rate career starts at university where the degree itself has a poor reputation. A fourth year social work student describes these sentiments succinctly: “They think I’m studying a Mickey Mouse course. They don’t think we work hard. They think they are clever and we are stupid that’s why we come to do this” (Orton, 2007:149).

However, statements made by government officials have further tarnished the already lowly image of social workers within South Africa. Earle describes some strong utterances made by key political figures, the most

concerning being: “I don’t seem to be convinced that social workers are good policy-makers. So I don’t want them next to me” (Earle, 2008:34).

There is no doubt the image of social work needs to be revitalised and reframed if social workers themselves are to develop a collective pride and self-worth. Clearly there is a belief that the improvement of the reputation of the career is deemed worthwhile, as Collins states a recent study showed that almost all of the 1000 social workers interviewed for a study believe “social work to be a profession worth fighting for” (Collins, 2008:263). Kasiram (2009) refers to Chilwane (2009) who recently asserted that social work, as a profession, needs to reinvent and rebuild its reputation. If we are to ensure the continued retention of existing social workers and the ability to lure new entrants to the field, the reputation of the profession must be rehabilitated and deemed as a worthy and essential profession.

However it is important to note that the perceived collective reputation of the profession may not be unison across class lines within South Africa. According to Earle (2008:91), many rural African communities perceive social work to have a high professional status. These communities are fraught with low employment opportunities and social work is deemed to be a career that holds not only good employment opportunities, but also long-term viability in terms of employment (Earle, 2008:91). This cautions us to not allow Euro-centric or upper-middle class perceptions to alter our view of the perceived status of the profession, and it also allows an entry point in terms of expanding the positive reputations of the profession.

3.3.4. Leadership and NGOs

Leadership within an NGO setting requires a unique and specialised managerial stance. The complexity of balancing voluntary staff and permanent staff within the broad perspective of leadership is not often mentioned in detail within academic text, yet has profound influence on the execution of tasks within NGOs (Engelbrecht, 2015; Ridington, 2010).

Engelbrecht (2015) highlights the point that many social workers are managed by non social workers, driven partly by a neoliberal stance within welfare organisations. The notion that management should control the fiscus, maintain profitability, and control administrative functions whilst the social work staff relentlessly pursue interests of welfare interventions, continues to degrade the profession. It creates a dichotomous approach of cost effectiveness and quantity output versus the humanistic and individual outlook of social work. Thus the non-social work manager may focus on what appears to be the best and most efficient practice mechanisms, but are not necessarily the most appropriate approach to constructive and caring social work intervention. As Engelbrecht (2015:14) states “This increase in routines and standardised procedures encourages social work managers and supervisors to vigorously develop and employ targets and occupational standards in intervention methods that ensure defensible decisions, rather than necessarily the right ones.”

Ridington (2010) denotes that management in NGOs are often voluntary staff; they may have a desire to ‘do good’ within the organisation but know very little of the theoretical bedrock of the profession. In essence it is often volunteers with good intentions but no knowledge of the under-pinning of the welfare system, that play key roles in decision-making relating to output of services. It is here where social workers need to develop a strong leadership style, and ensure there is a true balance of the humanistic versus the maintenance of financial viability (Engelbrecht, 2015).

Ridington (2010) further interrogates the approach of management within an NGO, indicating that it may have significant influences on the staff within the organisation. He states that due to the fact that managers and voluntary staff are focussed on caring for clients, the idea of spending any resources to make the working conditions better for the staff in particular appears to be wasteful. Whereas in a commodity-based company it is presumed that expenses incurred for training, enhancement of staff would ultimately

increase productivity, Ridington (2010:57) points to the notion that within an NGO setting “the general public and donors expect their NGO investments to be directly applied to poverty alleviation with an absolute minimum dedicated to administrative concerns.” However the consequences of this are that often, this concomitantly with unsophisticated management, prevents the organisation “rising above crisis-to-crisis existence” (Ridington, 2010:58).

It is clear this management tension needs to be addressed or further denigration of skilful management, (required for NGOs), could result in lowered job satisfaction and further attrition rates of NGO based social workers. However NGO leadership on a more macro level also needs to be interrogated.

Leadership on a more macro level also plays a role in productivity and satisfaction levels. Tenuous relations between management of NGOs, and government have had resultant effects on productivity and job satisfaction of staff within South African NGOs. It is believed by some that NGOs have become disempowered due to their fiscal dependency on government; NGOs often have to “dance to government’s tune despite their sometimes better and more creative judgement” (Earle, 2008:27). A policy change that resulted in the shift from a residual to a developmental welfare approach has led to tensions with regards to workload and funding. The foundational idea of the developmental approach is a strengths-based perspective that aims to build resilience on a micro, meso and macro level. As a result it has been reported that government funding was based largely on the contribution made by the NGO in the area of group and community prevention work. Of course this is necessary to create a well functioning welfare system, but the main gripe on behalf of the NGOs were that they were also resultantly given additional statutory work with a funding approach that was based largely on the amount of hours spent conducting community and preventative work. The NGO social workers as a result found themselves to be stretched too

thin having to take on mandatory statutory work as well as the additional community based work (Baldauf, 2007; Earle, 2008.)

The increased workload heightened tension between the two arms, but of greater concern is the perception in some quarters that the relationship between NGOs and government is mimicking the old master and servant relationship that was prevalent within the old apartheid regime (Noyoo, 2000:462). This perception of an unbalanced relationship is clearly articulated in the following quote from a Child and Family Welfare social worker: "We told the government we weren't taking any more cases... no social worker can handle 250 cases. They told me, 'If you want to keep taking government funding, then you have to keep taking cases'" (Baldauf, 2007:online).

The overall shift in relationship between government and NGOs has led to feelings of being devalued, overstretched and under-appreciated on the part of NGO social workers. In fact some believe this is "destroying this capable and motivated portion of the welfare sector" (Earle, 2008:27).

Having explored macro concepts such as leadership and collective image of the profession, the focus will now turn to the micro factors relevant to job satisfaction, namely dispositional factors.

3.4 DISPOSITIONAL FACTORS

In addition to the influence of the environment, it is believed that dispositional factors of the individual social worker play a significant role in stress reduction and resilience within the workplace. This section will explore the concept of resilience, empathy, predisposition to depression as well as the surprising benefits of negative affect.

3.4.1 Resilience, optimism and natural empathy

Few studies have delved into dispositional characteristics of social workers, and how this may play a role in resilience and continued job satisfaction amidst challenging working conditions. As Collins states, there is no doubt that organisational and structural issues play a significant role in the well-being of the social worker, however, “resilience, positive emotions and optimism of individual social workers have a part to play” (Collins, 2008:265-266). In fact Collins has pleaded for further interrogation into the concept of social worker resilience and how this would affect their professional as well as personal lives.

Kinman and Grant (2011) conducted research in the UK to explore resilience among social workers and social work students. Resilience and higher coping strategies appear to be strongly correlated with those that are more adept at expressing emotions, incorporating emotional knowledge into their career and able to control and regulate their emotions (Kinman & Grant, 2011:270). The study confirmed that core emotional and social competencies of social workers play a role in their stress regulation. This is clearly significant to the overall study, as numerous authors have commented on the direct correlation of high stress levels to higher attrition of social workers (Coffey et al., 2004; Tham, 2007; Vyas & Luk, 2010).

John (2012) indicated that a core ingredient to a social worker’s disposition should be a high level of empathy; in fact he states that being an empathic person is regarded as a foremost motivation for people entering the profession. Similarly Clark (2006:77) postulates that a social worker’s inner character needs to imbue “courage, benevolence, compassion.” Although there is scant research on this, the probability is high that a social worker has unique emotional and cerebral patterns (John, 2012) that require a job with emotional interaction with people in order to feel fulfilled and stimulated in their career.

Clearly these personal characteristics are essential in order to be an adept social worker, but what is not mentioned in texts is that it is possible that this type of person would gain enormous reward and satisfaction from working in this field, as it taps into their core personality and interest set. Social work in essence may provide a unique outlet for these individuals to harness their true emotional talents. This comes across clearly in qualitative interviews among South African social workers and students. The main reason for entering the career is cited as a calling – a deep desire to work with and help people in need. Earle (2008:89) depicts core personality traits as driving this desire, included but not limited to “good communication and listening skills, empathy and compassion.” Closely linked to this is the deep satisfaction that is gained from making a difference in someone’s life – Earle (2008:90) quotes a social worker working within an NGO to depict to level of satisfaction gained “There is a real thrill involved in making a difference in someone’s life”. However, on the flip side of the coin, this strain of the working environment may also in some instances lead to feelings of helplessness and depression. This will now be explored in further detail.

3.4.2 Depression or negative affect

It has been empirically shown that some occupations have a higher risk of depression among the workforce than others. In fact, Worth (2010), states that social workers have one of the highest rates of depression of all professions. This is corroborated by research conducted among members of the NASW (National Association of Social Workers in the United States). A sample of 1000 active NASW members was drawn and it was established that 19% of the sample scored above the threshold for depression. Rates of depression within the general population are around 6 - 7%, significantly lower than the 19% cited for social workers (Singer, 2009). However, Collins (2008) questions whether it is in fact the working conditions per se that increase the risk of depression, or “whether people who are vulnerable to depression choose social work rather than another occupation because unconsciously they wish to work through personal problems by helping

others” (Collins, 2008:1186). Although it remains difficult to establish whether depression occurred before venturing into the field of social work, Collins (2008) cites research that refutes this notion - three quarters of the social workers in a study developed depressive symptoms only after the start of their social work careers (Collins,2008:1186).

Clearly a deep, on-going melancholic mood is not favourable. However, George (2009:1333) points to the notion that adverse associations with negative affect have overshadowed the functional aspects of negative emotions. George stipulates that these feelings have adaptive value; they serve to signify the individual of impending problems that need to be resolved or acknowledged. In fact George (2009) and Damasio (2005) expand the debate further by stating that nonconscious negative affect can alter behavioural responses without the individual being consciously aware of the change. In fact Johnston and Leah, (2015:Chapter 9) indicate that a recent neurological study suggests that sad moods may in fact “enhance analytical thinking.” Thus although negative affect should not be encouraged, it may not in fact be the ‘demon’ in the workplace it is portrayed to be. Nevertheless, the significance of a statistically higher prevalence of depression among social workers has dire implications for job satisfaction and the complexity of this phenomenon needs to be understood with more depth and rigour.

The following section will explore the interplay between core values and situational factors, unique to social work.

3.5 INTERACTIVE THEORIES

“The causes of job satisfaction are not in the job nor solely in man but lie in the relationship between them. The prediction of job satisfaction necessarily requires an interactive approach - not because 20 or 30 correlational studies have ‘proved’ it, but because of the nature of man” (Lock, 1969:319).

3.5.1 Compassion satisfaction

Although much mention has been made of the negatives associated with working in the social work field, many authors point out that there are enough workers that remain in the field to warrant the notion that there is significant intrinsic value that is gained through social work (Adamson et al, 2014; Mandell et al., 2013; Mickel 2009; Smith & Shields, 2013; Stalker et al., 2007;). Smith & Shields (2013) observed that social workers stay in poor paying jobs, with high levels of emotional exhaustion because through helping others they are fulfilling needs and values that are compatible with their core nature or personality. In essence social workers obtain immeasurable compassion satisfaction from the ability to help others in their job (Adamson et al., 2014; DePanfilis, 2006; Smith & Shields, 2013).

Compassion satisfaction can only occur through the interaction of personality traits and organisational support. Thus as long as the social worker has enough organisational support to ensure clients are truly helped, the reward the social worker feels in helping others forms a significant buffer against burnout and emotional exhaustion and ultimately intensifies job satisfaction (Stalker et al., 2007:188). Adamson et al. (2014:526) expand upon this by stating that there is a “dynamic and fluid” relationship between the “benefits and strains” of the job. This implies that it is essential to ensure the negatives do not tip the balance and ultimately negate the satisfaction contributors of helping others. In order for compassion satisfaction to be realised there needs to be interplay between situational factors of the organisation and dispositional factors of the individual social worker.

As stated, increased compassion satisfaction aids in increased retention and positive affect. However, Piper, Saslow & Saturn (2015) indicate that acts of compassion have further reaching capabilities than just a good feeling. It has been shown that merely witnessing acts of compassion have profound neurological and physiological changes within the human body. Compassion shows an elevation of Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS) as well as the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS). The stimulation

of the PNS - the “calming self-soothing system” (Suttie, 2015:online) as well as the SNS – the arousal or flight or fight epicentre of our brain, only occurs in very unique circumstances. These seemingly diverse functions of the SNS and the PNS are only utilised together to form an emotion when a human needs to act prosocially, but also needs to stay alert. Piper et al. (2015) believe that this physiological and emotional reaction is brought on by the release the hormone oxytocin. So what does this all mean? The fact remains that this study shows that the act of compassion prevalent within social work creates a neurological and physical reaction that is only possible under “unique circumstances that involve both profound social engagement motivation and arousal, such as infant caretaking, sexual activity and emotional crying” (Piper et al., 2015:51). Neurologically speaking, social workers, through this elevated physiological reaction experience feelings of “moral elevation” (Suttie, 2015:online) that most people only get to experience during very unique experiences in life.

3.6 CONCLUSION

It is postulated that situational, dispositional and social processing issues all play a role in creating either satisfactory or inadequate working conditions. However, it is a complex array of these factors that ultimately define satisfaction levels, presenting a situation whereby it is impossible to pry out only one factor that would influence job satisfaction. It can be related to a spiderweb of intricate interactions, a weakness in one corner of the web creates ultimately creates systemic weakness. There is a significant interplay of positive and negative factors that play out against each other but often feed off each other. Social workers within South African face the direst circumstances, and yet many still remain dedicated to the profession and obtain a level of satisfaction from helping others, that would be most difficult to find in other careers. Collins (2008:259) states, “Positive emotions are common in difficult situations. There are positive outcomes of stress; growth and change is [sic] possible amidst considerable demands and there are benefits, possibilities and opportunities.” Our task is to ensure enough

possibilities and opportunities are presenting to social workers so that they may continue to offer much needed respite to the millions of South Africans that are in dire need of welfare intervention. The views of social workers on contributing factors will be explored through in- depth interviews. The findings of this study will be presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF JOB SATISFACTION WITHIN THE AMBIT OF SOCIAL WORK IN AN NGO SETTING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter aims to meet the third objective of the research as laid out in chapter one, namely, to explore contributing factors that impede job satisfaction among South African social workers employed in an NGO setting. Chapter one laid the foundation for the research by exploring generic contributing factors to the alarmingly high attrition rate of social workers. The goal of the research is to explore factors that contribute to both attrition and retention of social workers, and to generate interventions to increase retention. This has been expanded upon chapter by chapter.

In order to understand the concept of job satisfaction among social workers, it was imperative to primarily understand main generic theoretical drivers of job satisfaction. Consequently chapter two explored the concept of job satisfaction within four main theoretical frameworks, namely situational theories, dispositional theories, social processing and interactive theories (Cohrs, Abele & Dette, 2006; Judge et al., 2001; Judge & Klinger, 2008; Redmond, 2014; Thomas & Griffin, 1983). To summarise: situational theories hypothesise that job satisfaction is extrapolated purely from the working environment. On that account job satisfaction would be entirely determined by the nature of the work, or the working conditions within the organisation (Judge & Klinger, 2008; Redmond, 2014). Dispositional theories take the approach that the personality of the employee is a significant determinate of job satisfaction (Judge & Klinger, 2008; Redmond, 2014). Social Processing theory intimates that employees extrapolate their feelings about job satisfaction from their co-workers (Redmond, 2014). And finally Interactive theory metamorphoses the influence of both

environmental as well as personality factors into a combined determinate job satisfaction level (Judge & Klinger, 2008:398-399).

Chapter three expanded upon this theoretical context by framing relevant issues within the ambit of social work within these dominant theoretical frameworks. This chapter will follow through on this process by exploring themes and sub themes of the qualitative study conducted, within these four dominant theoretical frameworks.

SECTION A: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following section comprises a discussion of the research methodology utilised.

4.2 RESEARCH PREPARATION FOR STUDY

The sections covered are:

- Research approach
- Research design
- Sample, method of data collection, pilot study and
- Data processing analysis and interpretation.

4.2.1 Research approach

The research approach was qualitative, positioned largely within the ambit of an exploratory, phenomenological paradigm. This method was chosen as the qualitative process aims to gain insight and knowledge of complex phenomena and provides a window into the participants' world. (De Vos et al., 2012), Resultantly, this approach, allowed the researcher to gain a more holistic emergent view by exploring perceived contributing factors to job satisfaction within an NGO setting. The researcher focussed on subjective exploration of the concept of job satisfaction and related experiences solely from perspective of the participant (De Vos et al., 2002).

4.2.2 Research design

The study incorporated approaches from both an exploratory and a descriptive framework (Fouche & De Vos, 2012:96). An exploratory, descriptive design was been chosen for this study, as the variables of experiences within the workplace, and the subsequent effects on job satisfaction have been largely unexplored within the milieu of the South African social work setting. The aim was that this approach would aid a comprehensive, in depth understanding of the subject matter.

4.2.3 Sample

A non-probability, purposive sampling technique was utilised. This approach was deemed a necessity, as it was paramount that the participants met the parameters of the defined population (Delpont 2012:392).

The criteria for inclusion within this particular study:

- Social workers with a minimum of two years social work experience.
- Social workers currently working in a social services NGO setting, that is oriented towards child welfare, child protection or family services.
- Participants that reside in and work in South Africa.
- Proficiency in English

The sample consisted of twenty Participants, gathered from five organisations within the Roodepoort, Tshwane, Sasolburg and Kagiso areas. The participants were recruited in their personal capacity; this enabled the researcher to ensure that criteria relative to the purposive sample were strictly adhered to. Each person that was interviewed was thoroughly briefed prior to the interview on the purpose of the interview, potential risks and benefits of the study. Each participant was informed of their rights and their ability to withdraw from the research at any stage. It was not deemed necessary to obtain permission from the organisation at which they worked, as the interview was based on perceived impediments

to job satisfaction of social workers in general not pertaining to the specifics of their organisation. The social workers were interviewed in their personal capacity and did not represent their NGO. The interviews were conducted over a period of four months, from April 2016 to the end of July 2016. Each interview took on average an hour to complete.

A pilot study was conducted on two participants in order to guide the development of the interview schedule (Kim, 2010:193). The pilot study enabled the researcher to make final adjustments and revisions to the interview guide to guarantee the validity of the survey.

4.2.4 Data collection

The choice of data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview. This consisted of a guide with predetermined questions that allowed the researcher to gather information in a flexible manner. The interview was not doggedly adhered to but rather conducted in a manner that covered the overall structure of the interview guide but made allowances for climate-setting techniques utilised to put the participant at ease (De Vos et al., 2012).

Within the scope of this study the participants' permission was obtained for the interview to be audio recorded. 18 out of the 20 participants offered permission for the audio recording and 2 participants preferred the researcher to take written notes. All interviews were transcribed shortly after the interview date.

4.2.5 Data analysis

According to Schurink et al., (2012) qualitative research involves turning vast amounts of data into categories by identifying patterns and bringing order to the chaos. The researcher utilized the approach of Schurink et al., (2012:403-404) by reducing the data through the following methods:

- Generating categories and coding the data

- Testing the emergent understandings and searching for alternative explanations
- Interpreting and developing typologies.

Finally now the data will be presented in this chapter through qualitative means of interrogation.

SECTION B: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

This section will cover the gender of the participants, as well as the length of period working as a social worker in total, and the length of period working at their current organisation.

4.3.1 Gender of participants

Figure 4.1 Gender of participants

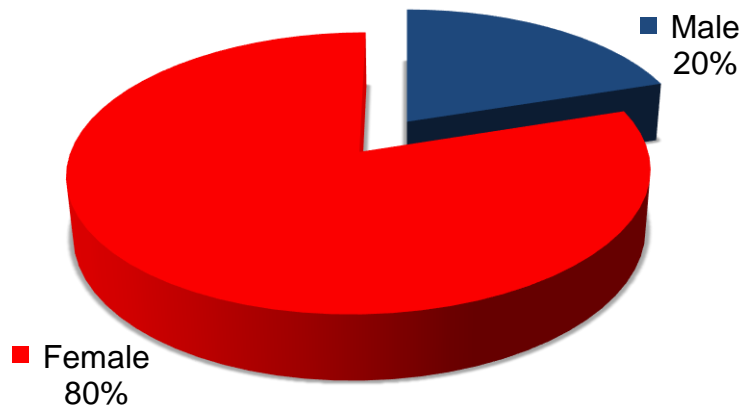


Figure 4.1 Gender of participants (n=20)

As is apparent the large majority of social workers interviewed were female (n=16). This gender skew is not uncommon within the social work field, as denoted by Earle (2008) where she stated previous research studies have shown a female dominance that ranged from a high of 90% to a low of 85%.

4.3.2 Length of time working as a social worker

Each participant was asked how long he or she had been working as a social worker since graduating, as well as how long they had been working in their current organisation. The information is presented below:

Figure 4.2 Number of years working as a social worker

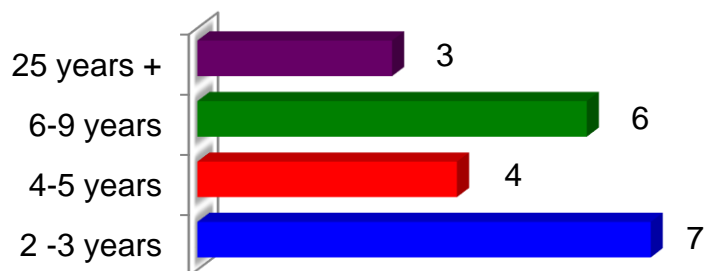


Figure 4.2 Number of years working as a social worker (n=20)

Over a third (n=7) of the participants had been working in the field for either two or three years. Half of the participants had been in the field for between four and nine years. Three respondents had given the field over twenty-five years of expertise.

4.3.3 Length of time working at current organisation

Figure 4.3 Number of years working in current organisation

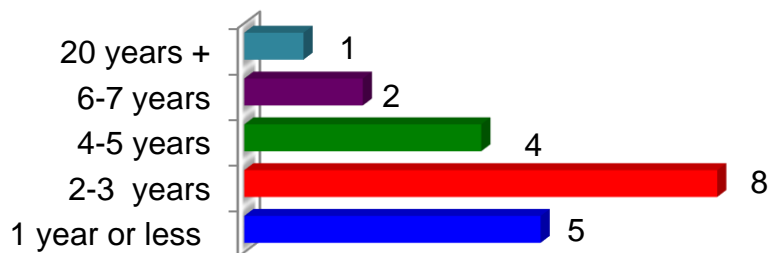


Figure 4.3 Number of years working at current organisation (n=20)

The large majority of participants had been working at their current organisation for less than three years. Six of the participants claimed to have been employed at the NGO for between four to seven years. One participant has been working at her current organisation in excess of twenty years.

SECTION C: RESEARCH EXEGESIS

4.4. THEMES, SUB-THEMES AND CATEGORIES

The core themes utilised within the semi-structured interview guide ran concurrently with the main theoretical underpinnings of antecedent factors to job satisfaction. Each main category contained subthemes, as graphically represented below:

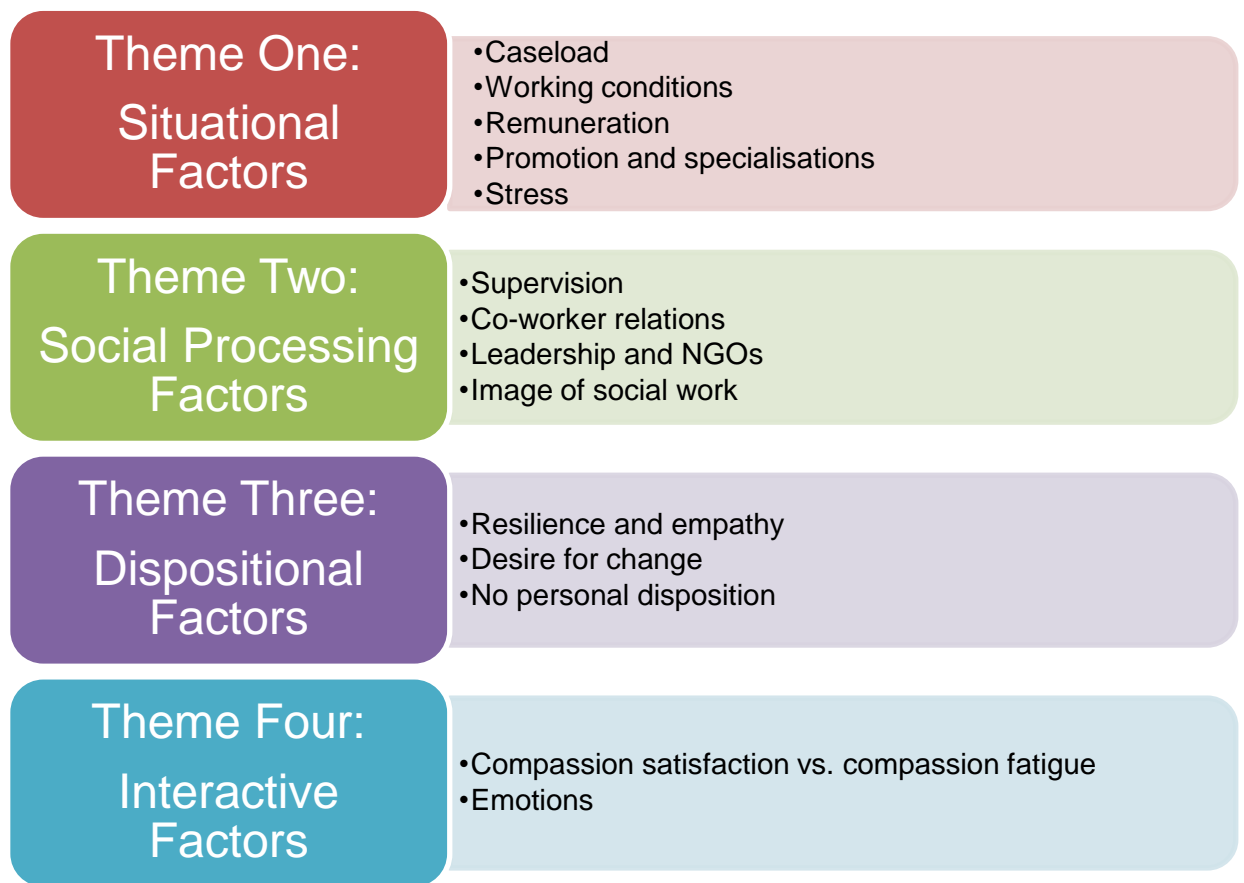


Figure 4.4 Themes within dominant theoretical positions of job satisfaction

Within the certain sub-themes specifically situational factors and social processing factors, separate categories emerged. This is depicted in tabular form below:

Table 4.1 Theme one: Situational factors - Themes, sub-themes and categories

Theme One: Situational Factors

| Sub-themes | Categories |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Caseload | Excessive workloads Bureaucratic hindrances Complexity of cases |
| Working Conditions | Access to vehicles Safety Lack of resources Office space |
| Remuneration | Remuneration disproportionate to qualification and responsibility High turnover and lowered motivation Repercussion for personal life Social work as a calling Passivity of social workers |
| Promotion and Specialisation | Limited opportunities within NGO Unique niche fields Postgraduate qualifications and increased specialisation at tertiary level On the job training |
| Stress | Work-home interface Fear of children being harmed on their watch Physical and emotional side effects of stress Court proceedings Unique coping mechanisms |

Table 4.2 Theme two: Social processing factors - Themes, sub-themes and categories

| Theme Two: Social Processing Factors | |
|---|--|
| Sub-themes | Categories |
| Supervision | Benefits of supervision Need for increased emotional support in supervision Lack of time for supervision |
| Co-worker relations | Closeness Lack of resources eroding relationships |
| Leadership and NGOs | Lack of acknowledgment from the board Need for financial transparency Lines of communication |
| Image of social work | Perceived perceptions of social workers by legal fraternity DSD social workers' perceptions of NGO social workers |

Table 4.3 Theme three: Dispositional factors - Themes and sub-themes

| Theme Three: Dispositional Factors |
|---|
| Sub-themes |
| Resilience and empathy |
| Desire for change |
| No personal disposition but only option to obtain a degree |

Table 4.4 Theme four: Interactive factors – Themes, sub-themes and categories

| Theme Four: Interactive Factors | |
|---|--|
| Sub-themes | Categories |
| Compassion fatigue vs. compassion satisfaction | |
| Emotions | Positive emotions recalled Negative emotions recalled |

4.5 THEME ONE – SITUATIONAL FACTORS

Within this section the following sub-themes will be interrogated: caseload, working conditions, remuneration, stress factors as well as opportunities for promotion and specialisation.

4.5.1 Caseloads

Exploration of the theme of caseloads gave way to categories of excessive workloads, bureaucratic issues, and finally complexity of cases.

4.5.1.1 Excessive Workload

The vast majority of the participants cited excessive workloads as gruelling and problematic. One social worker indicated that her caseload was in excess of 400 cases. In fact there was only one participant that stated the caseload expectations placed upon social workers were manageable. Although large caseloads is a commonplace occurrence among child protection social workers worldwide, South Africa appears to show the extreme, specifically among NGOs (Baldauf, 2007; Earle, 2008; Kasiram, 2009). The emotional and physical strain that is being placed on the child protection social worker is palpable.

“... For myself there was a time about two years ago, that I wanted to resign. Well, I actually resigned, because I could no longer cope as I was overwhelmed by the heavy caseload. I just felt that I no longer had the strength” Participant B.

Many participants described the notion of feeling out of control, overwhelmed and powerless in the face of such daunting caseloads. This leads to feelings of being depleted both physically and emotionally by the nature and magnitude of the job. Such despair has lead many to believe the only option available is resignation. This notion is supported by research conducted in the United States that intimated feelings of inability to cope and complete work timeously are cited as the main reasons for stress and attrition (Arrington, 2008; NCoCD, 2006).

This cycle of attrition ultimately exacerbates the dilemma as the remaining social workers are thus tasked with the responsibility of taking over extra caseloads as well as possibly training and supporting new staff (Westbrook et al. 2008:39). Some of the participants describe how they may have been able to cope with the existing caseload, however the added workload from staff turnover tips the balance.

“I find I am staying on top of the new intakes but unable to cope with the inheritance of two social workers’ caseload” Participant S.

“My biggest challenge is when social workers leave because there is a huge turnover of social workers....So when the old social worker leaves she leaves a whole case load which becomes my responsibility ...” Participant T.

Of course as with many transitions of this nature, this cycle then also exacerbates the emotional and physical exhaustion of the remaining social workers. Discernably when a social worker is emotionally and physically depleted to this degree, the client ultimately suffers.

“As much as I want to help people but I must help myself first because I am the engine and if the engine has a breakdown everyone will have a problem with that” Participant G.

It is clear that if a social worker is unable to function optimally there is no hope of providing meaningful client interventions. As the participant eloquently stated, the social worker must be helped first. If the social worker is stretched to the extent that s/he is unable to deal with cases of abuse timeously, or offer quality intervention to all clients, ultimately the intervention process breaks down and the client is at risk (Baldauf, 2007; Earle, 2008; Kasiram, 2009; Narsee, 2013).

Demanding and large caseloads also inhibit the process of creating emotional bonds with clients and ultimately lead to feelings of lack of

accomplishment on the part of the social worker. In fact some believe high caseloads are merely setting the social worker up for failure (Coyle et al., 2005; Mcfadden, 2013; Munro, 2010; NCCD, 2006; Trevithick, 2014; Westbrook et al., 2008).

“We have been taught the person centred approach, but it's impossible to do! You end up having to have a mixed approach to problem solving just to keep your head above water. I would love to do the person centred approach ... but you can't because you just don't have time. If I was given the chance to work under this ideal situation I would love my job and I would certainly have more satisfaction” Participant I.

The ideal situation is described by some as curtailing the caseload so that the social worker can do his/her job to the best of his/her ability. If the workload remains so immense, the ability to ensure meaningful interventions is impeded, and resultantly the chances of decreased job satisfaction remain profound (Judge et al., 2001; Judge & Klinger, 2008).

On top of dealing with excessive workloads the social workers are often confronted with bureaucratic hindrances as well as cases that are by nature very time consuming and complex. Both these issues add to the encumbrances of an existing gruelling workload. These areas will be covered in greater depth in the following two sub sections.

4.5.1.2 Bureaucratic Hindrances

Over half of the participants reported significant delays and added burdens generated from bureaucratic procedures, specifically related to requirements set from legislative bodies, in particular the Children's Court. The social workers cited delays in receipts of Form 30s and frustrations with obtaining birth certificates, with added complications if the mother of the child is a foreign national. Mention was also made of the difficulty of obtaining placements with a registered place of safety. The most common complaint, however, was the delays experienced with obtaining Form 30s.

“...Form 30 is delaying us [sic] because sometimes it takes up to six months to a year to process. So now the work keeps on piling up. Sometimes a case can be delayed for up to two years” Participant D.

“Foster care cases are being struck off the roll because their Form 30 hasn’t arrived in time...Is it fair on the kids on the ground?” Participant G.

The requirement of the Form 30 during the legislative process of placing a child in foster care is directly related to the amendment within the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act 32 of 2007. Legislation dictates that a Presiding Officer of Children’s Court may not approve the placement of a child in care with a “ foster parent, kinship care-giver, temporary safe care-giver, an adoptive parent or curator” without having determined that the person in question is not registered on the National Sex Offenders Register (Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act 32 of 2007:32). Although there is a clear understanding among the social workers that this legislation is a protection mechanism for the child, the long delays experienced in obtaining the clearance certificate are halting the court proceedings for foster placement, and ultimately placing the child at further risk and future uncertainty.

“Bureaucracy wins over the best interests of the child” Participant I.

“Those people who are just doing these things are sitting in those high offices. They are not coming to the ground to see what is exactly happening. ... They will just say “okay per quarter you have to finalise 25 foster care cases.” How can I finalise 25 foster care cases when I have to send Form 30 to the Social Development in Pretoria. Then it takes six months to come” Participant G.

It is apparent that the social workers feel that there is disconnect between the legal experts who write the legislation and the arms of the system that are responsible for implementation. The sentiments that are projected are of legislators trapped in their ‘ivory towers’, with little awareness of the

challenges on the ground, such as the lack of human resources available to produce legislative documents crucial for finalisation of court cases. Ultimately postponements in court proceedings not only creates more work and added burdens for social workers, but more importantly places the child at greater risk, as the participant stated so clearly “bureaucracy wins over the best interests of the child”.

The inability to finalise court procedures due to impediments in official procedure, adds to an already overwhelming workload of social workers. Further to this, is the added difficulty in finding registered places of safety.

“...it takes like a year before you can get your certificate to say that you are registered [place of safety] ... So... we have a lot that is in good condition, they meet all the requirements but they just don't get their certificate”
Participant E.

Social workers within the study indicated that the procedures to register a place of safety is so time consuming that new places of safety are not being registered expeditiously and the social worker at the end of the day is often unable to find placement at a registered facility.

“How do I feel as a social worker if I know that this child that I was denied to be at a temporary place of safety because of maybe legal structure?”
Participant J.

This is not the first time this issue has been acknowledged: the University of Pretoria Centre for Child Law (2013) cited that delays in registration revolved around lack of understanding of the registration process, little to no support from the DSD, including a lack of communication as to what the facilities should address to ensure registration. It was pointed out that the a Draconian approach was utilized by the staff of the DSD and “the processes appear not to centre around a careful consideration of the best interests of children, but are instead being carried out in an officious manner that places

children at risk” (University of Pretoria Centre for Child Law, 2013). This belief was definitely given credence by the participants in the study.

Many of the social workers in the study added that, despite bureaucratic delays, the increased complexity of cases is also adding to the encumbrance of a large caseload.

4.5.1.3 Complexity of Cases

Just under half of the participants indicated that there is a belief that many cases are becoming increasingly complex. Mention was made of the necessity of dealing with a far greater number of professionals with one case; clients often have lawyers involved or their own health care practitioner.

“The clients often have lawyers involved and we are also busy with intermediaries, mediation and parenting plans. It’s especially challenging because of the complexity of the job” Participant A.

The need to deal with so many parties for one case, when the social worker is already burdened with an excessive workload, adds to the time needed to finalise statutory work. Simultaneously many social workers indicate that they are also required to act as mediators and create parenting plans that are in the best interest of the child.

It is clear that the severe challenges social workers experience in relation to workload issues detracts from their ability to produce meaningful interventions. This produces a spiral of job dissatisfaction, as the worker appears to never have time to conduct his or her work in the chosen manner.

The participants within the study have clearly spelt out that excessive workloads are a significant detractor from a satisfying job, however working conditions within NGOs are also meaningful determinate factors of job satisfaction among social workers; this area will now be traversed.

4.5.2 Working Conditions

Working conditions relevant to social workers aggregates mainly around the following categories: access to vehicles, safety, lack of resources and office space. It is clear from the start that some of the participants felt desperate at the overall lack of resources available to NGO social workers:

“Working in an NGO makes it a lot more difficult, because our resources are scarce and it makes our job so much more difficult. There are literally no resources and that's the truth” Participant I.

“We really work with the bare minimum and we just have to make do with what you have” Participant T.

4.5.2.1 Access to vehicles

As cited by the DoSD (2009) lack of reliable vehicles significantly hampers the ability of social workers to do their job efficiently. Earle (2008) alludes to the notion that this is even more severe in NGO settings. Severe financial constraints within an NGO create impediments to proper maintenance of vehicles and purchasing of new vehicles. This is clearly a significant encumbrance for child protection social workers; all participants except one cited the intense frustrations regarding poor access to vehicles. It was made abundantly clear that there are generally insufficient vehicles for the organisation to function optimally:

“When it comes to vehicles, we only have 2 and we have 23 staff members, so obviously 2 cars are not enough” Participant K.

These concerns are not unique to this research, the memorandum handed to the DSD and the presidency by social workers on the 19th September 2016, also highlighted the myriad of problems originating from vehicle shortages. During the march social workers that were interviewed by media mentioned sharing one car for over fifty employees (Madibogo, 2016). The

lack of vehicles has significant knock-on effects on both the stress levels of the social workers and their ability to finish their work timeously. Specific mention was made of the inability to attend to serious cases expeditiously as well as to arrange transportation to fetch documents for court.

“If you’ve got an urgent case and you don’t have a car to get there. You end up getting threats from fellow social workers [saying you] didn’t show up then you try to explain but ... they don’t understand that” Participant G.

“Last week Friday I removed a child and I had to attend a court sitting yesterday for two cases. If I had a car, I would have ensured that after the proceedings, I go straight to attend to the case, only to find that I didn’t have transport and I had to come back to the office and just sit and wait. Later the police phoned to say the mother of the child opened a case against me because the mother did not understand why a social worker took her child. If I had a chance to go and tend to the case before the mother decided to open a case at the police station, it would have made the situation easier. Even now I must attend to the case but I’m stuck at the office because of no transport” Participant D.

Many of the participants recounted stories similar to the one mentioned by Participant D. The delays experienced in urgent cases, due to lack of access to transport, not only risked the intervention process but added to the immeasurable stress the social workers are already under. One of the added consequences of the intense pressure that the social workers are under due to poor vehicle access, is heightened tension between staff members:

“Today was supposed to be my day to have the vehicle but somebody has taken the car and hasn’t spoken to me about it. I’ve got to get to Pretoria to get documents for a court case tomorrow. I know the person that took the car had to get to court but I felt disrespected and angry and I was shouting at them” Participant I.

“So in the end we end up fighting for the cars...When you come in the morning you are told there’s an urgent meeting for let’s say supervisors. So one car is already gone. Now you’re left with one, so twenty people now fight for that one [car]” Participant K.

Co-worker support is regarded as one of the most significant buffers against stress and burnout among social workers (Collins, 2008). However it is apparent that vehicle shortage is creating such tension between staff members that the important resource of co-worker support is being eroded.

Not only was there a shortage of vehicles in each organisation, but also existing vehicles were often poorly maintained, as highlighted by the comment below:

“We do have a very big vehicle problem, they are very dilapidated and they are definitely not safe to drive far with. ... this makes it quite scary!” Participant A.

Mention of unsafe vehicles has been made both in academic texts (Earle, 2008) and by many of the participants themselves. Safety is obviously not only related to transportation but a myriad of other factors, the following section will explore the concepts of safety within the job.

4.5.2.2 Safety

Child protection social workers are by nature of their work, often exposed to unsafe and violent situations (Balloch, Pahl & McLean, 1998). This is not only commonplace in developing countries but it is a worldwide phenomenon. The DoSD (2009) makes reference to the fact that considering South Africa is beleaguered with violence and specifically gender based violence it is likely that child protection workers may find themselves at even greater risk than average.

“Is there security for me? There’s no security for me. So it’s basically putting my life in danger” Participant G.

“Yes, that [the building] is also unsafe and going out for visits is even more unsafe” Participant P.

Safety concerns related to the area in which the office space was situated, travelling to unsafe areas, as well violence as a direct result of social work based familial interventions. Stories ranged from social workers being trapped inside a property by a client, being accosted at work premises, being threatened by clients and being victims of theft. Many participants shared their personal experiences of violent situations; many of them visibly emotional when recounting their experiences:

“I also feel very at risk at our satellite office. It is just a one-roomed building right off the street and then clients come in to see me there. When I am there I am all alone and it really is scary. I had one incident where a client that was schizophrenic came in and was behaving very strangely, and then he started touching me very inappropriately - I was so terrified. When I told him to stop he became very aggressive and I just didn’t know what to do, eventually I just ran out and tried to get help from people on the street” Participant S.

“He just threatened me – the guy [said] “I will deal with you! I promise I will deal with you!” I said “No! If you want to deal with me it’s fine, but in this case, you have to understand that I have looked at the best interest of the child. You have to look at what’s best for the child during mediation.” He said “No I will deal with you!” Next week I heard he was arrested. He had shot the biological mother. So you see how dangerous the job is. It’s very dangerous. After that I was always looking.... every day making sure that no one comes here without my knowledge. So that’s how dangerous it becomes at times” Participant G.

There appears to be a quiet acquiescence that there is little that can be done to ensure safety; that there is truly insufficient support for social workers with regards to their personal protection. There is a clear perception that from a macro level the police do not have the time or

resources to assist them, and on a micro level the organisation they work for offers few guarantees of the safety of the social workers.

“What was so awful for me is that I didn’t get any support from my superiors... I was completely brushed aside and told to get on with it.... I felt so misunderstood and really felt like I should have had a debriefing session not a lecture on how I should have coped” Participant S.

“I am very unhappy about the fact that I don’t have a cellphone from the office, or pepper spray or anything else. We don’t have any form of security...For us to ask the police to go with us, that is just a losing battle because they are never available” Participant A.

A large majority of participants made mention of the vulnerability they feel in relation to safety, and generally the lack of support they feel from both police and their organisation. In fact it was at times alarming to learn of the perceived lack of emotional support provided by their organisations. Balloch et al., (1998) reports that this lack of perceived support from management encourages a disinclination to report abuse and receive apposite debriefing sessions, as the social workers subliminally feel they are at fault for finding themselves in a tenuous situation. This cycle of self-blame and heightened stress ultimately plays a key role in disenchantment and dissatisfaction on the part of the employee.

Added to the woes of lack of vehicles and fears of violent interactions, the participants also mentioned a dire lack of resources as a significant antecedent factor to job dissatisfaction.

4.5.2.3 Lack of resources

The majority of South African NGOs are financially under resourced, (Earle, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2006; Naidoo & Kasiram, 2006) and the possibility is high that the recent global recession has added to the woes of the NGO sector. In fact respondents made mention of the recent increased scarcity of resources.

“I have worked here for many years and I am seeing a significant drop in standards all around. Small things like we no longer have notepads to write on. If I am seeing a clients and I need to take notes I used old papers and staple them together and use the back side of the paper - how can we be expected to take notes without paper?” Participant S

Just under half of the participants within the research made mention of intermittent non-functioning telephones, computers, printers, Internet access, and even some mentions were made of scarce stationary resources.

“Phones haven't been working for two weeks we don't have a working Internet and our printer is not working. For a period of about two weeks we didn't even have electricity” Participant I.

“I do know other offices that don't have phones and you have to bring your paper. How can you be motivated to do anything if you have...if you don't even have the basics?” Participant M.

Not only are lack of resources contributing factors to increased stress levels, but also the participants made clear correlations between lowered motivation levels and lack of resources. Lack of resources increases the difficulty associated with completing work timeously but it also has significant implications for the social workers when they have court appearances or deadlines to reach. The stress of not having these resources is so taxing that often they resort to utilising their own funds to ensure reports are delivered. Social workers often made mention of the fact that they were required to use their own finances in order to get documents printed or emailed, especially when documents needed to be delivered for court proceedings.

“The courts don’t understand that we don’t have internet to send through documents or we are unable to print documents, so what ends up happening is that we have to make a personal sacrifice due to lack of resources. We ended up using our money to make photocopies for court documents because there is no petty cash. We are supposed to raise funds for petty cash but how do we find the time?” Participant I.

“The problem sometimes is with the printer. I think there was a time for three weeks it was not working. I had to use my own money and print at the internet café down the road” Participant E.

Once again these factors tied in with limited personal financial resources: the social workers were required to make personal sacrifices in order to conduct their work efficiently. This was not only mentioned in this research but also within the memorandum that was delivered to the government by social workers in September 2016. The memorandum read: “Starting from the 20th of September 2016 we will no longer be utilising our personal resources to render government services. We further [are] resolute that we will no longer be utilising our personal resources including our cell phones, our cars, our laptops” (Madibogo, 2016:online).

Within the context of lack of resources, mention was also made by some of lack of placement resources, specifically place of safety institutions. Participants had also previously mentioned the difficulty in finding registered institutions, citing mainly the difficulties in the registration process as a hindrance to new institutions being registered.

“You are on your own, you have to find a place of safety and you end up knocking off at 21h00, 20h00, midnight... And everyone is in the comfort of their homes, tomorrow it’s just the same thing” Participant L.

“other external resources such as place of safety ...there is [sic] so few...when you need to remove a child, finding a place for a child is...is so draining...To the point where children stay in the circumstances because we’re looking for places” Participant M.

Clearly basic resources such as stationery, computers, internet access and phone lines are necessities for the smooth running of any organisation. However the shell or office space is significant in terms of appearance, safety and space.

4.5.2.4 Office space

Just under half of the participants made mention of challenges experienced with regards to office space. The lack of available space for private interview rooms was regarded as a major limitation to developing a strong rapport with clients. Along a similar vein there appeared to be few facilities for children, specifically a play area or a private area to conduct play therapy.

“Great, you have a therapy room, but it could be booked by somebody else and you do need to have a personal conversation with one of your clients, it must, it must impinge on your ability to kind of really be deep and personal with that client... They’re not comfortable enough then to share what they would have if you were completely excluded from everything and everyone”
Participant O.

“We’ve got one proper interview room [for a staff complement of 23], it’s a limitation” Participant J.

“We don’t have a proper play area. There is one upstairs but all we’ve got is a small box of toys” Participant A.

The inability to have private space with clients significantly impedes the ability to develop a strong rapport and illicit private, yet important, information for the intervention process. This is specifically true of being able to create a welcoming and child friendly atmosphere in order to ensure younger clients are at ease and comfortable to precipitate openness and sharing in the therapeutic process.

Further to that, even the most basic of facilities, such as toilet facilities were often in dire need of repair or attention. Mention was made of feeling sub-standard by not even having appropriate bathroom facilities.

“Yes I always have to make excuses and apologies if they want to use the bathrooms. It is always a case of our seat is broken; it's not flushing. It's wet there, there is dampness in the building and there is never a time when I don't apologize. I actually shriek when they ask to use the ladies. I don't go to the loo myself; I go upstairs to another organisation... The whole setup is demoralizing and it doesn't look successful. It's not healthy” Participant A.

All of these factors impact not only on the social worker's ability to do his or her job to the best of his/her ability. Looking at this within the context of job satisfaction theories, poor working conditions are known to significantly increase the level of job dissatisfaction felt by the employee (Basset-Jones & Lloyd, 2005; Judge et al. 2001; Smith & Shields, 2013). The following statement highlights this sentiment:

“We could perform much better if it looked nicer. It is demoralizing because it is nice to go to a friendly well-kept place” Participant A.

4.5.3 Remuneration

Remuneration of social workers in South Africa, and specifically within the NGO sector is notoriously low, and it is believed by many academics that it remains a key factor for high attrition rates within the field (DoSD, 2009; Earle, 2009; Engelbrecht, 2006; Kasiram, 2009).

Within this broad section a number of categories emerged, namely the idea of remuneration being disproportionate to the qualifications obtained, high turnover as a direct correlate to low salary, repercussions for personal lives, the concept of social work as a calling rather than an economic contributor and finally the passivity of social workers in relation to acceptance of remuneration. The one area that all participants willingly brought up was the concept of remuneration being disproportionate to responsibilities of the job. This will be the first area discussed.

4.5.3.1 Remuneration disproportionate to qualifications and responsibility

Satisfactory pay is no doubt a significant contributing factor to job satisfaction in all careers (Smith & Shields, 2013). However Kasiram (2009) points out this is a weighty debate for social workers as their salaries are notoriously low. Clearly this sentiment is shared among the participants in the survey as all of the social workers interviewed made comments that indicated they did not believe they received fair and equitable recompense when considering both their qualifications and the work they do.

“Eish. Don’t ask me about the salary. You know why I’m saying that? Because when it comes to month end, every month I’m like, God, after working so long do I really deserve this little?” Participant K.

“[commenting on salaries] what they actually are telling us is that we’re not even second rate citizen” Participant P.

The issues of perceived self-worth came to the fore in the research, as is highlighted by the statements above. Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge (2008) believe that remuneration plays a critical role in personal judgement of self-worth. The authors postulate that broader society often judges citizens on the basis of their economic achievement, thus it is likely that lower remuneration would result in even lowered self-esteem (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008).

“You want more but you know you can't get more. And that's not good for your own self-esteem as a professional person” Participant A.

Thus not only do the social workers have to deal with a myriad of other stressful factors in their job but ultimately their self-esteem takes a battering due to their low pay. Many of the participants commented on the belief that when looking at their qualifications and the important work they do, they are clearly not compensated well, especially when comparing their salaries to other sectors or professions:

“In some other companies, my salary is like the cleaners' salary... or someone who's just got a diploma for a few months, and I went to Varsity for 4 years. I even have a Masters which I completed as well. So when it comes to the salary, I think that's terrible” Participant K.

Despite the obvious fact that social workers earn less than many other professions, discontent was aired due to the lack of parity between DSD social workers and those working in the NGO sector.

“I feel it is kind of unfair, especially coming from the government side; we should be paid the same amount that government social workers are getting paid, because we are doing the same work. For example, I have supervised a student last year and I have eight years experience, she now is getting more money than I do because she's a social worker for the government” Participant B.

It is interesting to note that some of the social workers appear to have a good grasp on the long-term effects of society with regards to a well functioning welfare system, but it is questionable as to whether the macro bodies have a deep understanding of this. One participant accounted a story where she highlighted the lack of long-term vision of the work that social workers do:

So I used to ask people ..., why do they think .. social workers we get this[sic] poor salaries and [I was told] “well you don’t bring in money to...you don’t generate... you are just an expense”. And it’s true in a way but if we don’t heal the people it’s going to have a greater expense to the community” Participant T.

Engelbrecht (2006) points out that although salary is an important factor that sways attrition and retention rates, it cannot and should not be deemed as the only factor. Engelbrecht highlights that a multi-pronged approach should be utilised with financial compensation being a contributing factor, but not the only factor. The concept of attrition and low motivation is a key factor within the foray of remuneration and will be explored within the following category.

4.5.3.2 High turnover and lowered motivation

The majority of participants cited high turnover and lowered motivation as a side effect of poor remuneration. It was made abundantly clear that it remained extremely difficult for the participants to stay motivated in their careers considering the challenges, specifically financial.

“..because at the end of the day you ask yourself. The question that most social workers ask themselves, but why am I going through all this for this small amount of money that I’m getting?” Participant G.

“I’m not motivated. I work because I have to meet some deadlines but I’m not really motivated” Participant C.

It was reported that low remuneration had a profound effect on levels of motivation, many participants portrayed feelings of merely capitulating to the status quo and acknowledging they no longer have the energy to give their best to their job when they are receiving so few benefits. The extreme of the continuum resulted in some participants believing that the poor salary with added factors of poor working conditions was forcing them to make tough decisions about exiting the field.

“Sometimes I find myself like I want to change the profession, I want to quit because it’s just too much. Everything is just too much whereas the salary is just not enough. It’s not enough to get by” Participant E.

“If I were offered a job in a different field today, I would accept it without a second thought” Participant G.

Not only was mention made of the participants themselves contemplating exiting the field, there was clear belief that it contributed to fewer new entrants into the field.

Low salaries offered within the South African NGO sector may also in fact be contributing to migration of social workers. This is not a new concept as Engelbrecht (2006) noted in a study on migration of South African social workers, that the large majority were motivated to leave largely by financial motives. Although only two of the participants mentioned possibly leaving the country, it is an important factor considering the possibility that many of the participants would in fact desire to stay in their career if they received improved remuneration and better working conditions.

“That’s very stressful and it will only lead you to one way. It will only lead one to greener pastures and you see our social workers going to UK; going to Australia; Canada because they are paid well. So, that’s why there is brain drain in that field” Participant G.

“I love social work, so I’m sure there are jobs out there, social work jobs that pay better, so I’m considering the UK” Participant F.

The profound effect that low remuneration has on social workers is driving them out of the field and possibly to other countries to work. In order to make these life changing decisions the participants must be experiencing significant strain in their personal lives. The effect of financial constraints when you have a family to support is clearly a significant contributing factor to satisfaction within your job. This will be examined within the following category.

4.5.3.3 Repercussions for personal life

Social work is not a profession that is driven by huge financial rewards. Although the desire to help people is rewarding and often makes up for the lack of financial incentives, the realities of life often bear down on the social worker, as the inability to provide for their families in the desired way creates discontent. A large proportion of the participants described their difficulties in this regard:

“Unfortunately at the end of the day you have responsibilities ... You feel you can’t give your kids the things that other kids get. ... There is a real fear of being unable to pay for things and not being able to support your kids” Participant T.

Discussions by the social workers related to intense stress and fear relating to financial burdens, anger and frustration at not being able to provide the kind of life they would want to offer their children. The one participant discussed the belief that after a very draining, gruelling day at the office you did not even have the financial means to treat yourself to anything that was beyond the very basics, as there just wasn’t enough money at the end of the day.

“And the thing about earning a low salary is that...I mean, none of us went into social work for the money. But the practicality of earning that salary and trying to make ends meet and give your family the best...it becomes... quite overwhelming” Participant K.

“There were times where I couldn’t even sleep where I prayed to God and said I wish I could take another job tomorrow... I sometimes lose concentration because I am stressing over money” Participant D.

In all of the comments made by the respondents a common theme emerged of fear, anxiety and stress about the future, panic of not being able to provide for their children. Mention was made of the stress of trying to make ends meet affecting sleeping patterns and concentration – a clear sign of intense stress. The question remains, why do social workers remain in the field despite the poor salary and working conditions? The following section adds some clarity to this question.

4.5.3.4 Social work as a calling

Although earning a low salary created many difficulties for the participants, some saw social work intrinsically as a calling and this took precedence over financial contributions. Although only a quarter of participants were in agreement with this notion, it is never the less important to explore this, as it is believed by many theorists that the significant fundamental value gained from social work negates the difficulties such as poor financial contributions (Adamson et al., 2014; DePanfilis, 2006; Smith & Shields, 2013;).

“I suppose the job has to do with passion...This job is a calling for me, so even though the salary is not satisfying I try not to focus on it” Participant I.

“For me personally; social work is more of a calling. As much as I need to pay my bills etc. I love my job and that is what really pushes me to do what I do” Participant B.

“It will never be enough for the amount of work you do, ... we just do it for the love ... just for the love or the sake of it...to help other people”
Participant N.

It is apparent that the participants believed the notion of helping people was intrinsic to their personality, and that although the salary and working conditions were tough, the satisfaction that came from doing work that helped those in need overshadowed the negatives. Being advocates for change and helping others was deemed to be important enough to forgo the benefits of a good salary, however it was also pointed out by some that as much as social workers need to be advocates of change for others, the need is great to be advocates for change for themselves, instead of remaining passive and complicit in poor working conditions.

4.5.3.5 Passivity of social workers

Although only a minority of participants cited this as a spontaneous response those that did so mentioned it with passion, and discussed this concept with great depth and thus it was decided to include this as a category. The three participants that discussed this concept believed that social workers were too unassertive and accepted poor working conditions without standing up for themselves.

“..Maybe it’s the issue of passiveness... So we need to find our voice to stand up for ourselves and be our own advocates for change” Participant J.

It was described as a necessity to create a unified voice to speak out at the injustices social workers experience, just as social workers are the metaphorical voice for the ‘at risk’ groups of society. Mention was also made of the need to have a governing body or union that stands up for the rights of social workers, so that individual social workers would not have to take up the fight on an individual basis. The point was made that if this occurred social workers would have to take time from their schedule to be an

advocate for change, and the myriad of clients that needed the interventions from social workers would suffer.

“...if we did act like change advocates and... then I think our voice would’ve been heard more and...But... if we had to stop and worry about ourselves...And make plans, somebody else would suffer. We would then fail to be the advocate for them [clients]” Participant M.

The ability to move vertically in your career is deemed essential for on-going job satisfaction and motivation. Opportunities with this regard will now be scrutinized.

4.5.4 Promotion and Specialisation

Promotion is a key concept in the idea of job satisfaction. It is crucial that employees are given the opportunity to advance when skills have been developed and dedication shown. Without the reward of upward mobility employees tend to lack motivation, withdraw and show decreased job satisfaction (Redmond, 2014). This is obviously crucial to the area of social work where so many other areas may be contributing factors to decreased job satisfaction. The participants mentioned the notion of promotion and specialisation within the context of NGOs and on the job training.

4.5.4.1 Limited opportunities for promotion and specialisation within an NGO

It is widely commented in academia, that there remains scant opportunity for advancement and career growth within the social work arena in South Africa (Earle, 2008; Mickel, 2009; NCCD, 2006; Westbrooke et al., 2008). Earle (2008) expanded upon this concept by highlighting that the NGO sector represented the extreme, with a distinct lack of upward mobility within the NGO sector. A large portion of the participants in the study distinctly expressed this; participants’ beliefs about opportunities for specialisation

ranged from perceptions of narrow opportunities to outright non-existent prospects.

“No opportunities for promotion. Promoted to where? There is no room for promotion here” Participant G.

“It’s non-existent!” Participant K.

“It’s zero” Participant J.

“Here’s no promotions, you can forget about promotion” Participant P

The responses concur with the notion that many social workers truly believe there is no hope of promotion or advancement in their career. What is pertinent, is the very direct responses from the participants, indicating their absolute certainty that advancement is most unlikely.

“I think it is really sad that there is no growing opportunity for social workers if you compare them to other jobs. People won’t eventually be motivated to better themselves because what’s the worth?” Participant A.

The lack of opportunity to be challenged in a more senior role results in acute frustration, lowered self-esteem, lowered motivational levels and ultimately increased likelihood of attrition (Redmond, 2014). However promotion is also an important factor in terms of increased remuneration, as well as recognition of skills acquired and mastered. Clearly increased remuneration is a crucial component of promotion, as many participants argued that even if they were to be offered promotion it is unlikely that this would result in increased remuneration.

“There might be a slight opportunity to get a promotion in name but not necessarily in salary” Participant D.

“So promotion yes but salaries – I don’t see anything” Participant E.

“Even if it would be there, I believe then...I won’t be getting that much money ..., so I won’t take it anyway” Participant K.

There is undoubtedly a prevalent belief that that even though promotional opportunities may be present, it would not equate to increased remuneration. A large portion of the participants regarded the promotion as an increase of responsibility without the corresponding increase in salary. This perception is corroborated by Earle (2008), whereby she states that it is not uncommon for senior managers to earn only slightly more than entry-level staff, as funding limitations do not allow scope for increased salaries. If there are distinct beliefs that you may receive a promotion, with added responsibilities yet you are unlikely to earn substantially more than you were prior to the promotion, it is probable that this will ultimately result in a perception of low support and recognition for dedication and hard work. This will in all likelihood ultimately result in decreased morale and motivation (NCCD, 2006:4).

Those that did see opportunities ultimately saw horizons brighter outside the field of a South African NGO. It was expressed that there were opportunities for social workers to advance in the corporate sector, in government or in internationally based NGOs.

“I believe with social work you can work anywhere. You can be in the corporate environment... I love working in the child welfare sector, but if I want more opportunities I believe I can’t get them. If I feel like going into government or the international NGO’s; I think the opportunities are there” Participant B.

Despite the overwhelming negativity regarding scant opportunities for promotion, there were glimpses of social workers creating their own unique specialised field in order to stay motivated.

4.5.4.2 Unique niche fields

Despite the clear negativity of lack of promotional opportunities many of the social workers interviewed found their own unique ways of expanding their skill set to challenge themselves personally.

“Right now I’m specialising in mediation which is very unique, and very different from what other guys are doing. ...So I want something that is challenging; something ... different every day” Participant G.

“I would like to learn more about becoming an accredited adoption social worker. In the future I would like to work ... doing purely private adoptions” Participant I.

These participants were finding their own niche field to create stimulation for themselves. This was not done at the behest of the organization they worked for, but in finding their own way to stay motivated and challenged with new concepts and ideas. Specialisation at university level is also a debate that rages on in academic literature. The participants in the study also spontaneously mentioned this, which will now be highlighted below.

4.5.4.3 Postgraduate qualifications and increased specialization at tertiary level

The debate regarding specialisation of social work remains split (Earle, 2008). Many believe a generic approach to social work education and specialisation is imperative, however the other side of the debate highlights the notion that specialisation would boost self-esteem, create a better sense of achievement and ultimately increase job satisfaction. A few of the respondents mentioned that they believe specialisation should take place from fourth year level.

“So if you had the opportunity for specialisation... that would be your very area of intense knowledge. Yes, and then as a social worker you would be trusted... ... Trust me that I know what I’m doing” Participant K.

“From varsity I was completely unprepared ...We should try and specialise at varsity. ...You just have this one year where you like this is the field I really feel passionate about” Respondent M.

Participants explored the concepts of increased confidence and a perception that other stakeholders would show increased trust in their professional integrity if the social workers had specialised at a university level. Similarly mention was made of the ability to spark ‘passion’, to find an area of great interest and learn more and specialise within that particular area. It is clear the respondents saw this as a possible contributor to both increased job satisfaction but also more innate professional confidence.

Although many participants believe in the importance of specialisation at tertiary level, there was a group of participants that felt devoid of optimism in this area. They believed specialisation, specifically at postgraduate level, did not contribute to upward mobility in the social work career ladder. Some of the participants believed, that despite significant efforts to obtain postgraduate qualifications, this did not allow scope for promotion or specialization in their job. It concomitantly did not place them ahead career wise at all.

“I’ve reached the ceiling with where I am, even if I do get my master’s or whatever I will still be where I am now. I would have been disappointed if I had a PhD and I’m still sitting where I am “ Participant A.

“Because with other professions when you do your masters for instance, you upgrade to a certain level. But here.. you’re only improving yourself and...nothing is happening, no recognition is being given to you, then you feel that it’s not worth it” Participant K.

This feeling of lack of advancement with a postgraduate qualification is not only germane to the South African situation, in the U.S.A social work was grouped as one of the careers that showed the lowest opportunities for

increased remuneration after graduating with postgraduate qualifications (Smith, 2011). Similarly Earle alludes to studies that point to the notion that contrary to common belief social workers with higher levels of education “did not earn more but ironically somewhat less than those with basic education” Earle (2009:146). In point of fact Matlhabe’s (2001) findings of research conducted within South African indicates that just half of social workers indicated they would not consider further studies as there were insufficient incentives to do so. Certainly if this mind-set continued to grow, it may impede the growth and expansion of postgraduate social work qualifications within South African universities.

Of course greater knowledge of specialised fields can also be obtained through on-the-job training, not necessarily merely at university level, which is also an effective way to ensure personal growth, challenge and expansion.

4.5.4.4 On-the-job training

Ridington (2010) notes that capitalistic entities foster training and staff enhancement, as there is an entrenched understanding that higher staff motivation and productivity, would ultimately induce increased revenue. However within an NGO there is a dominant belief that all funds should be streamed towards poverty relief not staff costs. This together with real budgetary constraints, NGOs cultivate few opportunities for staff training. This was seen as a significant disappointment to many of the respondents as the desire for opportunity to advancement is palpable.

“You know they cannot afford to pay you more but that you would like to have that opportunity to attend courses, have training and to further develop yourself as a social worker and a supervisor” Participant B.

“They paid for the training on the children acts but other training they don’t pay for. I thoroughly enjoy the workshops and I enjoy learning more. The other day in supervision I mentioned that we need support to attend

workshops and she just shut me down saying we will not support financially”
Participant Q.

The desire to expand professional knowledge and to develop further skills is palpable and it is clear the gratification would translate to increased job satisfaction. The frustration experienced by not budgeting for training or delaying approval for funding for courses is tangible, as highlighted below:

“In terms of training we don’t get all of our courses for free, and the courses often have to be done in your own time. ... there is a lack of insight that this is crucial to all areas. And even when you think there may be a chance for the board to finance something the process is so slow that most of the time it is too late when the agreement comes through” Respondent S.

The participants described training as a ‘light at the end of the tunnel’. There was distinct belief that valuable training recharged their batteries and allowed them the opportunity to advance and replenish themselves at the same time.

“Yes, we do. My supervisor is very nice. So let’s say I had a rough month last month, and then he’ll tell me, ‘Look I know it’s a rough month, but just push through because I have this training for you. You’re going to enjoy it and I think it suits your personality” Respondent H.

It is clear that targeted training that is suitable and interesting for specific personalities can do wonders in terms of increasing job satisfaction and enabling the worker to get through ‘tough times’. The idea of being able to keep abreast of new theories and to be challenged with innovative ideas is also a significant contributor towards increase job satisfaction.

“I wish we could have more regular training because theories and books change all the time and we really need to be kept up to date to do our job well” Respondent R.

The participants discussed the welcomed opportunities to challenge themselves through knowledge. Sauter et al., (1999) illustrates that challenge is often misconstrued with stress, however the authors point out that challenge energizes, motivates and challenges workers, however stress does the opposite. The following section will explore the contributing factors to stress as well as the consequences of long-term stress on the participants.

4.5.5 Stress Factors

A large portion of the factors that contributed to stress are areas that have already been scrutinised in relation to situational factors. Contributing stress factors stemmed from low salary, work overload, to the inability to finish work. Stress manifested itself both physically and emotionally, the participants reported physical ailments relating to stress, inability to 'switch off' and relax at home.

The most prominent issue was the constant concern about cases and the inability to emotionally detach from work issues at home or in private time. Many studies have found a direct correlation to stress and high staff turnover, and this obviously is a crucial area to explore (Curtis et al., 2010; Hussein et al., 2013).

4.5.5.1 Work-home interface

Agar (2010) discusses a survey of just under 2000 American workers that accentuated the fact that over half of the respondents brought their work home either through being unable to stop reflecting upon work, or by either bringing work home to do in private time. A large proportion of the participants in the survey struggled with the same dilemma.

"Yah so even in your own time there's no switch. There's no like okay I'm off now. It's constantly rehashing" Participant M.

“When you go home you still have to think about work, the cases that you haven’t finished, the cases that you have to finalize. So you don’t really rest” Participant C.

“I like my work to be up to date and sometimes I end up taking home work to be up to date with admin” Participant R.

The participants expressed inability to go home, relax and enjoy time with their respective families. Mention was made of how they are unable to ‘switch off’ at home and spent time pondering about difficult work cases. The participants note how detrimental this is to family life but have no way of halting the intrusion, it was apparent that they haven’t been given enough support to deal with the work pressures.

“It’s really difficult to turn off that switch and just be with family_without thinking about work. I think this boils down to the fact that we don’t get enough of debriefing and we aren’t taught how to focus on your family and not worry about your job” Participant I.

Despite the inability to stop your mind from wandering back to work, many participants reported that they are expected to do after-hours work, which erodes even further into their family time. Mention was made of being on 24-hour standby, or having to attend fundraising and additional work related events after hours.

“..we’ve got a work cell phone and you must take it home, and it must not be switched off... When I have call I must report, I must deal with crisis... you never get to just switch off and be with your family” Participant K.

“So for e.g. we have a fundraiser this weekend which we are expected to go to but it is R300 and we still have to pay for it. Then there are things like parents teachers evenings at school that we often end up having to attend if the house parents can’t make it...But there are also other things that happen... I feel as though this job is taking so much time out of my personal life and it takes its toll on you” Participant Q.

Relating strongly to the inability to switch off and have free personal time was the constant eroding of relaxation time with fears of difficult cases and of children within their statutory obligation being harmed.

4.5.5.2 Fear of children being harmed on their watch

A significant source of worry was the constant concern where the social worker believed children within their caseload may be in danger. Participants discussed cases where they believed the child to be in imminent danger and spent sleepless nights worrying about their cases. One participant in particular mentioned how a child had been killed during the re-unification process and resultantly the participant was always extremely stressed during the same process in new cases. Similarly there was significant concern that the work overload was so great that they were unable to attend to possible emergencies cases timeously.

“I get highly stressed when I know there are people that have emergencies and I’m fully booked, because I worry about what could go wrong”
Participant A.

“You don’t sleep, you worry, you’re thinking if this child goes back home, he’s probably just going to kill her or who knows?” Participant F.

The inability to “clear your desk” so to speak, keeps social workers in a constant state of angst: an overwhelming feeling of never being on top of your work as new cases, and sometimes urgent cases, keep flooding the system.

“The huge case load. It’s one major, major contributing factor [to stress] Because...before you finish the ones you were given yesterday or last week, there are already new ones waiting for you” Participant K.

4.5.5.3 Physical and emotional side effects of constant stress

There are severe physical and emotional side effects from not having any downtime. Many of the participants cited insomnia, headaches and irritability. One participant recounted an exchange with a client where she realised how impatient she had become due to her on-going stress.

“Because you’re so overwhelmed that you actually...you’re just kind of keep your own head above water. So it’s difficult to have patience” Participant K.

“Even at night we will be busy watching TV and I’m busy thinking about a case that I’m taking to court tomorrow and I’m missing this document; what, what, what. So I will end up having a sleepless night and headaches” Participant E.

These symptoms of stress are not germane only to the South African situation: a study conducted in American among social workers highlighted the notion that the majority of participants cited some physical or health related problems directly as a response to high and continued job related stressors (Arrington, 2008). According to this study exhaustion, psychological problems, and sleep disturbances were the most common symptoms cited (Arrington, 2008:6).

According to Collingwood (2016) the long terms effects of stress in the workplace do not only influence physical health but also impact your output at work. This is corroborated by a study in the United Kingdom where 8 out of 10 social workers believe that stress is significantly affecting their ability to produce meaningful interventions in the workplace (Schraer, 2015).

4.5.5.4 Court proceedings

Many of the participants narrated very stressful encounters at Children's Court, with the added difficulty of trying to produce a reputable court report with scant resources and little time. The stress of this was mentioned by just under half of the participants.

"Court. That's number one. High, high, high. ... big stressors... before court but inside I'm like totally a mess" Participant M.

Many of the participants expressed a feeling that the courts 'were out to get them' instead of collaborating to create the best pathway for the clients. Mention was made of Presiding Officers treating social workers in a demeaning and derogatory manner. This created a dread and fear of court on the part of the social workers.

"I think the court puts a lot of stress on us.. I think if we had more understanding presiding officer things would be getting better because I would still be strict and it needs to be strict –But he tends to be unnecessary and cruel" Participant H.

Despite the significant stressors, a few of the participants cited unique ways in which they combat stress.

4.5.5.5 Unique coping mechanisms

Only two respondents reported spontaneously that they have unique coping mechanisms when it comes to stress. This is concerning as obviously the majority feel overwhelmed, under resourced and unable to forge unique ways of coping with stress.

"I know you must not stop working when you're burned out but it works for me to fill my cup. I first have to give to the people that are important in my life, and then I can give to the clients. I cannot fill their cups if I don't have a cup. Filling my cup is very easy. I just go to coffee shops, visit with friends and in a week and a half I'm fine" Participant A.

“So now I prefer that when there is something that I am not happy about; I’ll discuss it with somebody and that way it makes me feel a little bit better, so that is how I deal with my stress “ Participant D.

Arrington (2008) notes that social workers’ resilience with regards to stress management is dependent on both the strategies utilised to cope with the immediate stress, and also ways in which social workers are able to bounce back and regain mastery over their situation. Similarly Arrington (2008) noted that social workers within the study noted exercise, therapy and meditation as significant stress relievers.

4.6 THEME TWO – SOCIAL PROCESSING FACTORS

Social processing theory infers that employees’ attitudes towards work are in partly sculpted by people in or associated to their workplace (Redmond, 2014; Thomas & Griffin, 1983). Within this section the following areas pertinent to social processing issues will be explored:

- Supervision
- Co-worker relations
- Leadership and NGOs
- Collective image of social work

4.6.1 Supervision

There is no doubt that the supervisory process is a key ingredient to increased job satisfaction and decreased attrition of social workers (Barak et al., 2008; Collins, 2008; Farmer, 2011; NCCD, 2006; Smith & Shields, 2013; Tham, 2007; Westbrook et al., 2008). In fact some theorists regard the supervisor-supervisee relationship as the most crucial workplace relationship (Redpath et al., 2015).

The categories included within this section will be the need for the benefits of supervision, lack of time for supervision, and the need for increased emotional support in supervision.

4.6.1.1 Benefits of supervision

Almost all of the participants acknowledged the importance and dire need for effective, high-quality supervision. Participants stated supervision was especially imperative within their area of speciality, as the brevity of dealing with children and making decisions on their behalf was too demanding, without supervisory assistance.

“I believe that no social worker can be without supervision because you are working with people's lives and futures” Respondent A.

Not only is supervision important from the perspective of being guided to make sound decisions, but effective supervision also ensures decreased stress, increased satisfaction and resultantly decreased attrition rates. (Barak et al., 2008; Collins, 2008; Farmer, 2011; NCCD, 2006; Smith & Shields, 2013; Tham, 2007; Westbrook et al., 2008). The participants that had developed a positive and healthy relationship with their supervisors described the intense benefits, including feeling understood and motivated.

“Yes. And she's very approachable. If something's bothering me, I know I can go to her and say, listen, this is really bothering me. It really helps me to feel free to speak my mind if I have to” Participant O.

“Yes. I am getting the best supervision sessions here with my supervisor yes. The support is amazing. So that is another motivation because we've got someone who is always there for us” Participant C.

The use of group supervision and panels to discuss difficult cases was also mentioned by some of the participants as helpful. This was described as a ways of ensuring that difficult decisions were made collectively rather than

one person having the sole responsibility of make crucial decisions about children.

“We have a panel where we discuss challenging cases and I find that very helpful. It helps us decide if the child should be removed or if they are other options” Participant I.

The participants that received regular and quality supervision emphasised the importance of this process in keeping their ‘heads above water.’ However there were participants that acknowledged the importance of supervision, but acquiesced to the fact there often there just wasn’t the time for sound, meaningful supervisory sessions.

4.6.1.2 Lack of time for supervision

Although many NGOs attest to the importance of supervision, often the intensity and urgency of the work does not allow for supervision to take place as regularly and intensely as is deemed necessary.

“My supervisor is good but time is not on our side, court procedures just take up too much of our time. I would love to have supervision weekly or fortnightly but ... It’s only happening when the supervisor has got time” Respondent I.

Some of the participants noted that they have hardly had any time to attend a supervision session. Mentions were made of yearly supervision sessions at best.

“I have only had one supervision ever since I’ve started working. That’s one year” Participant E.

“We hardly had supervision at all last year. We just became too busy and he didn’t have time” Participant F.

The cost of poor or erratic supervision robs the social worker of the opportunity to identify their key strengths, to highlight their achievements and to ultimately increase their satisfaction at work. Supervision should not only alleviate the emotional trauma of the job but also remind the social worker of the difference s/he is making to the broader community (Collins, 2008; Engelbrecht, 2014; Farmer, 2011). However when supervision does not fulfil these roles the social worker may at times feel “out in the cold”.

“They don’t have any supporting structures or anything to support us when you have been out you are just on your own you are just someone who has been thrown in the jungle” Participant L

“The stress is significant and the support I receives determines my output at work. Their lack of support for their social workers frames the organisation. I should get debriefing but I just don’t!” Participant S

However many of the participants did not see their lack of proper supervision as intentional but merely as a consequence of an overburdened, overworked supervisor.

“Look 10 people they all come with the different cases to one person it’s too much even for her.... You see, here who is going to support her?” Participant L.

“Social workers do not know how to nurture themselves because I think a lot of times, managers are just really thrown overboard with their jobs and they don’t have the energy and the capacity to nurture to their workers” Participant O.

Engelbrecht (2010) alludes to the fact that often the supervisor is overwhelmed with expectations within the organisation and thus they don’t have enough time to create a space for supervision or supervision that is calm, nurturing and open. As Engelbrecht points out a supervisor that is stressed and burnout himself will find it extremely difficult to offer quality supervision to other staff. It would appear that many of the participants

acknowledged and understand the extreme stress and pressure that the supervisors themselves are under, alluding to notions that management and supervisors themselves have been metaphorically 'thrown overboard'. There is an awareness that increased emotional support is needed for all levels of seniority, and certainly not excluding the supervisor in the process.

4.6.1.3 Need for increased emotional support in supervision

The large majority of participants conceded that supervision is often solely for work related purposes but it is not a space where personal feelings, stressors and emotional needs are addressed. Emotional support appears to take a subservient role to purely work related support.

"We have informal supervision sessions which foster a learning relationship... but there isn't space to open up about how we feel"
Respondent S.

"Supervision, we have monthly supervision. It's not emotional, how you are feeling? It's all work. Let's look at your stats" Respondent G.

It is clear the emotional needs of the social workers are not being catered for. There appears to be a lack of impetus with regards to giving the social worker space to express personal emotional struggles, which is crucial when dealing with such intense work. Participants mentioned there was a feeling that supervision was focused more on statistics, conclusion of cases and statutory regulations that personal strain or emotion. Westbrooke et al. (2008) highlight that effective supervision includes a variety of specifics with one of the crucial components being sensitivity to the unique emotional experiences of the worker (Westbrook et al. 2008).

"Some of the information you gather from the children is just so intense it touches you and it tests you. And then of course you don't have the opportunity to get debriefing yourself" Respondent R.

A large portion of the participants believed this intense emotional debriefing could only occur in the space and comfort of an external person. It was stated by some of the participants that to truly expose deeper emotions, it is essential to have a neutral, outside trained professional. Participants were desperate for some nurturance and space to feel completely safe to show their deepest vulnerabilities.

“If I had more money I could have medical aid and then I could go see someone and they could guide me through this. So you can have supervision but you can’t go for really counselling with someone you know, it has to be someone completely neutral, that can give you an objective point of view” Participant T.

“If only we could have an outsider that did some debriefing once a month. It would be nice if we had someone who could be objective, someone who could nurture and care for us a bit” Respondent R.

This need for an external form of debriefing may stem from the fact that the social workers themselves are overwhelmed, overworked and often have to face tragedy on a regular basis. In an organisation where everyone is trying to keep his/her heads above water, there are often unique ways in which co-workers support each other in order to survive.

4.6.2 Co-worker support

Social processing theories intimate that co-worker relationships play a crucial role in determining individual views of job satisfaction, as well as being able to look to their peers to make sense of their environment (Redmond, 2014).

4.6.2.1 Closeness of co-workers

Although there is limited literature on the role of co-worker support in the South African context, Collins’ (2008) studies further afield attest to the fact

that close relationships with workers is regarded as one of the most consequential contributors to persistent coping strategies (Collins, 2008:1181). In fact it is believed that these positive co-worker relationships act as a shield against workplace stress and burnout. Participants in the study clearly endorsed this point of view. There was overwhelming agreement that the difficulties the workers faced created a camaraderie and bond that would be difficult to replicate in other working environments.

“So the fact that we have terrible working conditions, but we have good communications with good colleagues ...it really makes you want to come and face another day. And in a way it’s probably your safety net” Participant M.

“That we communicate on another level and that we try to really assist one another to keep (laughter) standing upright in this situation. Yes, you kind of have to protect each other from the outside world” Participant P.

The ability to share and discuss daily stressors clearly acts as a buffer against the “sling and arrows” of daily toils. The ability to informally debrief, but to also use humour and ease tension through laughter is a key element of co-worker support.

“I’m very grateful for because somehow there is a hell of a sense of humour, a sense of dependency on each other – a teething component” Participant A.

“I’m close with all my colleagues and there are times where like during lunch we just sit around and there’s one who’s funny and they’re always making jokes, you are able to get your mind off what’s bothering you for that moment and just laugh” Participant F.

It is likely that the participants feel that it is unlikely outsiders would understand the complexities and the challenges of the job quite as well as their colleagues. There were also numerous mentions of the belief that the

relationship eco-system with co-workers was more like a familial entity than merely a work based relationship.

“I have been here for 25 years so the workers that have been here for long are like a family and you know a family doesn’t have to be rich to be happy. That camaraderie makes a big difference” Participant T.

There is no doubt that supportive co-worker relationships are crucial to stress reduction and burnout prevention. However there are some factors that play a role in eroding co-worker relationships, this will now be addressed.

4.6.2.2 Lack of resources eroding relationships

Even though the majority of the participants believed they have positive relationships between co-workers, mention was also made of the added strain being placed on the relationships due to lack of resources.

“The lack of resources are [sic] breaking down relationships between social workers. I believe this will ultimately break us” Participant I.

“And if it’s my day for visits and you take my car and you didn’t ask for it, then I will fight with you” Participant K.

The lack of resources is out of the organisations’ control, but it appears there is a distinct need for managers to understand the role that minimal resources have on co-worker relations. Increased conflict resolution or group sessions between the social workers may be needed to maintain the enormous benefits of good co-worker relations.

Discussing the need for group supervision.....“This will also be the time for us to learn about how to stop allowing stress and the frustration surrounding the lack of resources to get in the way of our relationships.” Respondent I.

Another area that can at times bring tension to the foray is the relationship between the social workers and the board of the NGO.

4.6.3 Leadership and NGOs

Although tenuous board relations are not mentioned in academic texts regularly, the complexity of balancing a volunteer based management structure with permanent staff can add heightened tension to an organisation, specifically when the volunteer staff may not in fact have a professional understanding of the role and nature of social work. (Engelbrecht, 2015; Ridington, 2010).

4.6.3.1 Lack of acknowledgement from the NGO board

The overwhelming message that was conveyed by the participants in the study is the yearning for small positive acknowledgments from the board. These seemingly small efforts would go a long way towards increased motivation and satisfaction within the working environment. Many of the participants believed that due to the fact that the board of the NGO was made up of professionals from other areas, they showed a distinct lack of understanding of the difficulties that social workers face, and a lack of understanding of key staff drivers and motivators.

“So respect, recognition – if you work hard – sometimes it’s really encouraging to say well done. We are proud! You did this! And in a way what’s so frustrating about that is that it wouldn’t be so difficult for someone to do. It would take one sentence. Well done!” Participant K

“I think if they also just showed us a little bit of appreciation, and of course I know only if its due” Participant T.

It was emphasised significantly by the participants that many of the affirmations that they so constantly yearn for would not take much time, or the small efforts that could be made could be conducted cost effectively.

There was a distinct feeling that little effort or creativity went in to finding alternate ways to make the social workers feel appreciated.

“It would be great if they could put more little treats for us to make us feel better even though they can't pay us more. Something small, it doesn't have to cost a lot of money, they could make an effort to get someone to come and talk or have a little breakfast. They aren't very creative in finding ways to make us feel appreciated. They feel the money should do that”
Participant A.

“It's the small things that make a big difference” Participant Q.

Participants expressed the belief that lack of financial resources should not discourage the board from trying other ways to show staff they are appreciated. Social workers in South Africa work within poor working conditions, with low remuneration and significant stress, the participants believed that just acknowledgement of their sacrifices would go a long way towards increasing self esteem and motivation levels.

“They could actually be doing other things to show you recognition even though it couldn't be necessarily an increased monetary compensation”
Respondent G.

“If the board of the organisation could just sit around, gather, and say okay guys but what are we doing for our staff since they are doing this good job?... I think they are failing many people in that regard. If you are not giving people a lot of money, at least make them happy” Respondent H.

Tying into this process is the belief that the board truly has very little understanding of the emotional challenges that social workers face, and this disconnect adds to the lack of will to institute small measures to say ‘thank you’. Similarly the board does not understand the necessity of spending money on ventures that result in stress release and nurturance of social workers. Mentions were made of the board agreeing to allow social workers a day off for a wellness day, yet were not prepared to contribute financially

to the suggestion, showing a lack of understanding of the necessity of stress relief. Some participants in the study proposed that it should be mandatory to have a retired social worker on the board, to mitigate the lack of understanding of the psychological stressors that social workers face.

“But still we cannot expect from them to understand exactly where we are coming from because some of them are lawyers, engineers working for other firms” Participant A.

“And it will also be good that maybe the board should also be run by maybe retired social workers, those who really know how it is to be a social worker and those who have felt the pain when they were still in the industry. So at least if the board can be made up with two or three people who were in the field and who really knows how it is to be a social worker” Respondent L.

A small number of respondents did feel that small efforts were already instituted, and they emphasised the importance of being nurtured and cared for in this manner.

“But we do have other payments in a way because we only work on Fridays till 1 O’clock...and we’ve got extra, we call it Pasella [gift] days, say for instance there’s a holiday on the Thursday, they usually give us a Pasella [gift] day on the Friday...or if it’s on the Tuesday we get the Monday off” Participant N.

4.6.3.2 Need for financial transparency

Many of the participants felt frustrated at the fact that the board are not transparent regarding the financial situation of the organisation. Participants understood that in all likelihood there were limited funds but felt the fact that they were being excluded from the decision making processes made them like passive participants or lacking control.

“Last year at our annual general meeting, the audited financials were not read to us because we were told we don’t have the know-how to understand. To me, they were undermining us” Respondent K.

“Previously, as a supervisor [at another organisation] ... I were [sic] responsible for that... I had tabs on every cent that came in and went out. And that was a much better situation, ...but in here things are very different ... it's totally disconnected, we know nothing about the finances” Respondent P.

Tied to this participants also expressed disappointment that the board often informs them at the last minute that there was insufficient budget to offer bonuses or increases. There was a belief expressed that due to the fact that the board consisted of other professions that there was not an understanding of what it is like to earn such a low salary and how completely dependent the participants are on any form of small increase.

“...a doctor, a lawyer and an accountant doesn’t know what it’s like to earn R8,000 a month” Respondent G.

“And giving you a letter this month, saying there's no money for bonuses, we had all planned our lives around the end of March and that is a BIG issue in the office right now. It is quite demoralizing” Participant A.

“...to be suddenly told you’re not getting a 13th check is devastating” Respondent B.

As Ridington (2010) points out those that manage NGOs often believe the idea of spending resources on creating more hospitable conditions for staff is antithesis to a charity organisation. However this approach not only lacks long-term vision but shows impaired understanding of the influence that support of staff ultimately has on worker motivation and productivity.

“So you see that is one thing that the management and the board don’t understand that if you make your worker happy then he’s going to service the people” Respondent G.

“If you don’t make me happy I only give two per cent to the people and it’s the community that suffers” Respondent I.

4.6.3.3 Lines of communication

The NGO Board consists of voluntary staff and are often full time employees at other organisations; thus board meetings often take place after hours to accommodate their normal working hours. Simultaneously the meetings are also relatively irregular. This unquestionably adds to the difficulty in terms of the lines of communication between the social workers and the board itself. Many of the participants expressed intense frustration with the processes and procedures of addressing issues with the board. In fact participants referred to this process as “broken telephone” as the concerns need to be first discussed with their supervisor and then their manager and finally the director who would be tasked with bringing it to the board’s attention.

“If there is something I need addressed I take it to my supervisor, she takes it to the manager, she takes it to the director and the director takes it to the board. So a lot of information could get lost - a bit like broken telephone. There are no clear lines of communication between myself and the board” Respondent R.

“[about the board] You can’t even approach them” Respondent K.

In a similar vein mention was made that it may in fact be intimidating for a manager or director to approach the board, she is after all still a staff member reporting to seniors and this may hinder the line of communication from the social work staff to the board members.

“But in terms of communication I think that people in middle management are not representing us, they are too intimidated and not assertive or they just don’t care. The board will listen if you are assertive and passionate enough about your staff” Participant S.

“Our director is sort of the link between us and the board. She is the one who sits with the board. I understand that she is in a difficult position because she is also an employee and there might be some communication from the board that she might not feel comfortable with” Participant H.

Overall there were not many positive sentiments regarding lines of communication with the board. In fact many believed it to be a very autocratic and dictatorial relationship.

“I get frustrated with the board, they make up these arbitrary decisions, they just dictate from above. They focus on what they want and follow it and don't consult us. They're dictatorial and autocratic and we aren't allowed to have direct contact with them” Respondent I

This dictatorial approach was extended to the autonomy that managers in the office are given. Frustration was expressed in the lack of autonomy given to the managers in the office. A significant number of the participants expressed frustration at having to wait for the board to meet and agree to proposals as this often created delays and feelings of being treated as minors.

“Well, I’d give more power to the manager, because she’s the manager of the office and I think it would be better if she manages the office and she just informs them. I think that will make it a lot easier for us to get things done. Instead of waiting till every third or fourth Saturday when they have a Board meeting and discuss what’s going on” Respondent H.

Many of the respondents even expressed complete lack of knowledge as to the functions of the board as they are completely excluded from the decision making process as well as the lines of communication.

"I don't know. When it comes to the board I don't know what happens there, because you're not informed. They don't even ask us how we feel about stuff" Participant K.

Looking at issues from a macro perspective, the collective image of social work by the broader society also plays a role of social processing factors and job satisfaction.

4.6.4 Collective image of social work

Social processing theories intimate that beliefs and attitudes of those that you work closely with play a role in influencing job satisfaction levels, however it is also possible that broader more collective impressions of the profession may also have an influence (Redmond, 2014). Earle (2008) notes that social work is known for its abject image within society. Within this section there are four broad sub categories that will be covered namely the perception of DSD social workers, legal relations and broader society.

4.6.4.1 Perceived perceptions of social workers by legal fraternity

Many of the participants believe that the lowly image of social workers is aggravated by interactions between social workers and the legal fraternity. There were varied mentions of Presiding Officers at court treating the social workers dismissively. Perceptions are that lawyers are treated with respect by magistrates, yet social workers are often disregarded. Numerous participants expressed views that even child abusers are often treated with more credence in court than they are.

"I feel like the guilty party when we attend court" Participant N.

"And just the fact that you're being ... shouted in front of the clients you know. They're the wrong ones and then here you are and the presiding officer he is shouting at you in front of them. You imagine you're the

professional but you're being treated like the criminal. Understand?"

Participant M.

Frustrations were expressed at continual postponements of court to accommodate many areas of the legal process for example, lawyers, clerks, and translators etc. however the same treatment is never afforded to the social workers. One social worker in particular mentioned that they are often expected to wait for hours at court and are not even given private space or offices to work in whilst waiting for the court proceedings and then ultimately the social worker is expected to work at home to catch up the lost time.

"Lawyers can be late and the lawyers are expected to be busy...But the social workers are never given the same professional courtesy" Participant N.

"And I think one of the things that a lot of the social workers specifically in this Magisterial District have been frustrated about is that every single person seems to be more important than the social worker...the translator, the lawyer?" Participant M.

Despite the fact that social workers are experts in terms of the psycho-social and emotional well being of the children, their skills are often not valued within the legal process. Mentions were made of the magistrates holding more sway to the recommendations of the lawyers about the best interests of the child, than the social workers.

"The other professionals, when they are looking at us, they don't value us that much. Now I'm referring to the magistrates, because I realise that when I go to court and I say something, they won't take it that the social worker said this. ...you've specialised in social work. You know about the interpersonal issues, the socio-economic, the psycho-social...that's your area of speciality. And yet despite all of that, when you get to court, like you say, the 5 minutes with a lawyer is deemed to have more weight [about recommendations for the child's future] than you what you do" Participant K.

Participants made mention of the need for more pedagogic intervention in terms of creating a space where social workers feel comfortable to assert themselves. Kasiram (2009) made mention of the need for joint education and participative management to ensure that social workers are up skilled to ensure that they are able to assert themselves in similar situations. Only with this ability to stand up for the profession will the cycle be broken.

“I mean the students, from first years, that when they get to different universities, then they need this to be taught in such a way that when they go out, they are competent to say here, I’m a social worker and I can stand my ground. And as a social worker I’m also a professional” Participant K.

It is apparent the image of social work needs to be revitalised and reframed if social workers themselves are to develop a collective pride and self-worth. Collins states a study showed that social workers do believe that social work is inherently a profession worth fighting for (Collins, 2008:263). It has been made clear both by participants in the study and by academics (Chilwane, 2009; Kasiram, 2009) that social work as a profession to rebuild its reputation and this can only be done by on-going efforts by social workers, professional bodies, government and academic institutions.

“We have to fight for social work because they always neglected us. And if we don’t stand up it’s going to be the same, it’s going to remain the same” Participant N.

“So for example at the courts, the presiding officer just treats you abysmally at first. There is this preconceived idea that you are a stupid social worker and you are treated as that. They tend to disagree with your recommendations and undermine you in front of the client. Once they get to know you it becomes a bit easier but it is a constant fight to get respect” Participant S.

There were glimmers of hope where many social workers are starting to see significant change in the perceptions of the legal fraternity when it comes to social work interventions.

“Yes, I think you know, I think the last couple of months I must say, I’ve come to the realisation that I think some of the magistrates are starting to get around and understanding and learning about attachment and the importance of a parent/child relationship and how that impacts the child’s behaviour... Absolutely. And you know, there are magistrates out there who, that really feels that the recommendations of the social worker is kind of you know, that’s the way to go. But there are some that still question.” Participant O

“The lawyers will often phone us and ask us advice. They often come to the office and I go to them and they are treating me exactly the same as they would any other professional person. They will first tell the presiding officer that they first have to find out what the social worker says before they can make a decision. So I do feel in those fields when they have in the past did not give us any credit, they have now realized that we do play a very big role and that we have a lot of the prodigy with the children’s act and the children’s court. They have had a lot of encounters with us at children’s court and I can proudly say that they have not walked away once with another recommendation that we have made considering the children. That was never the situation in the past” Participant A.

As has been stated altering the image of social work as a profession cannot not be done unilaterally, many parties need to come on board, including very specific efforts from government and governmental bodies.

4.6.4.2 Government’s perceptions of NGO social workers

A large majority of the participants in the study made mention of the poor working relationship between themselves, government and the DSD social workers (an arm of the government). Participants believed NGO social workers to be viewed as having less status than the DSD social workers.

“The DSD treat us in an authoritarian manner, they just instruct us to do things. They are not supporting us at all for ... They think they are in a higher authority than us they think they have a right because they are funding us. But the bottom line is we are doing the same job and we should be supporting each other and not looking down on each other” Participant R.

“The government organisations: I feel like they don’t treat us equally, they see us maybe as an outcast” Participant L.

The relationship between the DSD social workers and the NGO social appears to lack a collegial and collaborative approach. Mention was made of perceived authoritarian relationships and lack of synergy and support between NGOs and the DSD.

Many participants believed this stems from opinions of government powers that set the scene in terms of relationships between the DSD social workers and the NGO social workers. This is corroborated in academic text where Earle (2008) described many derogatory statements made by government officials concerning social workers. She believed this to further discolour the already submissive image of social workers within South Africa.

“You will see that the NGOs are playing a very important role but the Government is looking down on them” Participant G.

“Generally social workers should be more recognised, the Minister is just not helping with this ... I know it’s hard for government but social development sidelines us and this doesn’t motivate us at all” Participant I.

The following section addresses individual attributes of social workers and how their disposition may play a key role in job satisfaction.

4.7 THEME THREE – DISPOSITIONAL FACTORS

Dispositional factors play a role in decision-making about choice of career but also play a significant role in stress reduction and satisfaction within the workplace. Within this section the concepts of resilience, empathy and a desire for change will be explored.

4.7.1 Resilience and empathy

The concept of resilience came up in relation to prior personal challenges and ability to overcome adversity. There was an overwhelming belief that social workers' resilience enabled them to offer enhanced psycho-social interventions to clients. Participants made mention of the ability to develop intense empathy and encourage a strength-based perspective to clients. Earle (2008) indicated that social workers from disadvantaged backgrounds that had managed to overcome their emotional and social challenges proved to be excellent social workers.

“My father died when I was young and I was raised by a single mother. When I saw her struggles I would think that when I grow up I would like to find a way to see vulnerable woman who didn't have a proper educational background to develop themselves” Participant B.

“I think it was because of experience. The way I grew up... I was raised by a lot of relatives because my family was very poor. So then social work was the thing for me to reach many girls” Participant K.

Past challenging experiences often give an individual a great propensity to show natural empathy towards others. Participants mentioned this resulted in a real desire to understand the emotional world of the client. There was a palpable passion to understand, act upon and improve the lives of those disempowered in our society.

“I think when I was younger I wasn’t heard and understood and I put myself in their place and try and make them feel understood and accepted” Participant Q.

“My ability to listen; I believe that I am a good listener and that is very important in social work; to listen and to really understand what your client has been through” Participant B.

“I’m able to identify when someone is uncomfortable I smell it...You can just feel that atmosphere of this person being really scared and being very uncomfortable and I’m able to identify that very quickly and make them at ease” Participant O.

The participants highlighted their ability to listen without judgement to clients. Mention was made of the ability to sense unease, and to rectify this by making the client feel understood and accepted.

“I always make them feel at ease, that they are sitting here with a fellow human being as well that really cares and that wants them to function optimally in this world” Participant O

“I do not think there is “normal”. ... I think “normal” is when you feel happy in your space. If my client is happy in that little space, that is still acceptable, then it is his privilege to feel normal in that space, I cannot change that; I can just change him to function to his optimum in that space – to help him / her realize their potential” Participant A.

Many social workers have a deep desire for change to ensure the under privileged parts of society are given more opportunities for growth and advancement. This deep desire clearly has taken place with the knowledge that the client has to change in his or her own space and time.

4.7.2 Desire for change

There was a strong desire to change society albeit in a small way. The desire to make a difference in peoples' lives and make living just a little bit easier for people was an overwhelming desire among the participants.

"Every day I ask God to just let me make a difference to one person"
Participant A.

"I always like to help people. That's very satisfying to me.... So I feel rewarded and kind of like I've made a difference and that's my driver"
Participant H.

"I am a very loving person very caring and I like to advocate for other people where I can and I don't want to see another person struggle" Participant R.

Enormous reward and satisfaction emanated from being the voice for the voiceless and to help those in dire need to find direction and support within their lives.

4.7.3 No personal disposition but only option to obtain a degree

Some participants indicated they believed they did not have a personal disposition towards social work as a career, but they stumbled into the career, as it was the only academic stream they were accepted into, or were able to obtain funding for.

"If I was able to fund my studies then I would not have done social work, not that I am undermining the profession but I wanted to do something else. I always wanted to be a lawyer" Participant K.

"Actually I really wanted to get into journalism or law, social work wasn't my first choice" Participant S.

Despite the fact that this only applies to the minority of the participants, it is a warning sign that motivation and satisfaction is likely to be decreased if this career is not dispositionally suited to the worker. Earle (2009) stated that many chose social work, as it was one of the few courses (at that time) that did not require maths and science for admission. Similarly as one of the participants stated it was the only degree in which they could get funding. This initial lack of passion may ultimately decrease the motivational and satisfaction levels of social workers.

4.8 THEME FOUR – INTERACTIVE PROCESSES

It is clear that within the broader theories of job satisfaction, situational factors, dispositional factors and social processing factors all have distinct and imperative roles in dictating job satisfaction levels. However, as many authors point out, it is actually the integration and reciprocal relationship of all of these factors that ultimately leads to the formation of the concept of overall job satisfaction. In fact job satisfaction cannot and should not be viewed in a unidirectional manner (Feldman, 1988; Judge & Klinger, 2008).

This section aims to highlight the interplay of various factors that epitomise the eventual defining of satisfaction levels among South African social workers. The two sub themes that will be explored within this section are the continuum of compassion satisfaction versus compassion fatigue, as well as the overall emotional experiences of participants within this study.

4.8.1 Compassion fatigue versus compassion satisfaction

De Panfilis (2006:1067) describes compassion satisfaction as the fulfilment and satisfaction gained from helping others and experiencing well balanced collegial relationships. Alternately compassion fatigue is described as the

trauma experienced from helping those in dire need and finally burnout, the end of the spectrum, is described as a state of “emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced sense of personal accomplishment” (De Panfilis, 2006:1067).

In essence when applying generic job satisfaction theories (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Fisher, 2000; Judge, Hulin & Dalal, 2009; Judge & Klinger, 2008; Locke, 1969; Smith & Shields, 2013) to the field of social work it is apparent the ultimate experience of either compassion satisfaction or burnout are opposite ends of a complex spectrum. The ultimate role that satisfaction plays in determining output is in actual fact the combination of many varied areas ranging from situational factors (working conditions, caseload, resources etc.) to social processing factors (supervision, co-workers relations etc.) to dispositional factors (empathy, resilience etc.), and many other areas in between.

Many social workers stay in jobs with low remuneration, high stress levels, poor working conditions and overwhelming caseloads because the fulfilment obtained from helping others outweighs the negatives (Adamson et al., 2014; DePanfilis, 2006; Smith & Shields, 2013). Despite all the difficulties experienced by the participants in the study an overwhelming number still found enormous hope and satisfaction in helping others, despite the odds.

“My most rewarding part of my job is seeing the change in children's lives...When you see a prospective adoptive mom holding a baby for the first time, there is really nothing better. The rewards make it worth it”
Participant S.

“But it is the one thing that has kept me going in my job I fill my tank by helping others and it's an achievement and I think that's what has kept me going” Participant T

“The most rewarding part is where I know I have made a difference where I can see visible change where I can see the children I have placed in foster

care or been in therapy with me do very well, that is true satisfaction”
Participant R.

In order for compassion satisfaction to be realised there needs to be interplay between situational factors of the organisation and dispositional factors of the individual social worker (Adamson et al., 2014; Stalker et al., 2007). Thus as long as the situational factors give enough space to allow the social worker to do their job well, the benefits of compassion satisfaction should kick in. However it is apparent that compassion satisfaction can only take place if the balance between the different areas does not swing too intensely to the negative. For example if the workload of a social worker becomes overwhelming and they are unable to offer meaningful interventions, together with a situation where supervision is not offered and organisational support is lacking, the possibility of compassion satisfaction may in fact swing to compassion fatigue or even possibly burnout. Many participants described feelings of anxiety, depression and depersonalization.

“But only sometimes do I look forward to the next day. I enjoy helping my clients but often I just feel down. I don’t feel like going to work.. I wish I could quit. I wish I could get another job, you know” Participant E.

“I no longer felt like coming to work; seeing clients or seeing our caseload files. Even at home; I just felt tired and drained” Respondent B.

“There’s nothing rewarding about this job” Respondent K.

Feelings of a depressed mood and a lack of desire to continue working are clear signs that the balance of factors has tipped to the negative. The social workers are in a position where they no longer have the emotional capacity to be available to offer caring and meaningful interventions to clients. The end result of this is that the clients suffer enormously.

“I was getting to that point where I no longer cared and you know we are dealing with children who are vulnerable. And if you get to that point as a social worker where a case is reported to you and you don’t feel like investigating and you don’t feel like doing anything about it – it tells you a lot “ Respondent B.

It is clear these participants felt emotionally drained and exhausted, and some even expressed feelings of depression. There were distinct feelings of lack of achievement and being disassociated from the process of helping clients. It was incredibly sad to see feelings of indifference emanate as a consequence of compassion fatigue and burnout.

“I have good days and I have bad days, but the sad thing is that most days I am just indifferent nothing surprises me and nothing excites me” Participant S.

Clearly the continuum of compassion satisfaction to compassion fatigue is similar to a seesaw; too little support on one side can tip the balance into burnout, enough weight given to nurturance can tip the balance in the other direction. Emotions expressed within the context of both compassion satisfaction and fatigues were powerful and informative. Many theorists believe that emotion, as a measure of job satisfaction, is a powerful inventory of total job satisfaction levels (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Hulin et al. 2009; Judge & Church, 2000). This will now be explored further.

4.8.2 Emotions

Theorists such as Hulin, Judge & Dalal (2009) believe that measuring affect is as an important tool as measuring cognitions and behavioural reactions, within the sphere of job satisfaction. The authors describe job satisfaction as a multidimensional psychological response with emotional elements playing a crucial role in one’s evaluation of job satisfaction. In fact processes of the brain are so complex the only way a quick summary of the experience can quickly be spelt out to the consciousness is through a gut feeling or

emotion (Damasio, 2008; George, 2009; Gladwell, 2005; Johnston & Olson, 2015). Consequently, ensuring measurement of affect or emotion is essential within the spectrum of job satisfaction.

Taking this into account, the emotions that the participants recalled as most accurately reflecting their feelings about working as a social worker can be viewed as a summary or overview of their dominant feelings regarding job satisfaction.

4.8.2.1 Negative emotions recalled

Overall the most prevalent emotion mentioned in the study was anxiety. A close second involved the mention of feelings of fear, panic and dread. Generally these feelings of anxiety and fear centred around the enormous responsibility of dealing with children's lives, and being overwhelmed with a large quantity of work, which has to be conducted in a short space of time.

"I do feel anxious, you know, because of the fact that we work with children's lives and so there are times when I'm a little bit stressed in a sense that, oh, is this child okay?" Participant O.

"When there are some reports that has [sic] to be analysed, we try to hurry up on, I feel a little bit anxious and you have to work very quickly through it, yes...anxiousness there" Participant R.

"I feel intense anxiety going to court" Participant F.

The feelings of sadness, despair and guilt centre on not being able to help clients, and children in particular in the desired way. This is obviously an important overall factor that can decrease levels of job satisfaction and ultimately increase attrition levels.

"I feel guilt when I've gone to court and the child is returned to the abuser – I feel like I haven't done enough" Participant F.

“Sometimes you feel what can I say is it depressed or what? Ja, I think we feel depressed maybe for the kids and you can’t deal with it, you are really trying your best...” Participant L.

“Guilt because sometimes you can’t do what you want to do” Participant M.

A negative emotion that was still mentioned by a large portion of the participants but showed lower mentions than others was contempt or disgust.

“At the end of the month when I do my evaluations, sometimes I just feel that it doesn’t help me to complain all the time. Nothing is achieved. So...then I just have contempt for this job ...” Participant K.

“Disgusted because the parents of the children are sometimes not that cooperative even though you give them plenty of information and instead of taking whatever you bring to the table and changing the circumstances for the betterment of the children” Participant R.

Spontaneous mentions included feelings of disappointment, desperation and uncertainty, not only uncertainty about their feelings but about their future. Many of the participants described often having wavering emotions from positive to negative, indicating that situational and social processing factors may continually influence and be influence by dispositional factors.

“I have mixed emotions....They are mixed because I deal with different things every day. Sometimes you’ll find me very low. Sometimes you’ll find me happy. Sometimes you’ll find me just uninterested” Participant K.

“Dominant would be uncertainty and being not sure and unsettled” Participant Q.

4.8.2.2 Positive emotions recalled

Positive emotions that were also recalled by many as dominant emotions were the feelings of courage and hope. This probably ties in well with the concept of resilience, inner strength and a sense of achievement in overcoming difficult obstacles.

“I am very interested to learn more about the fields that I am in and that that gives me hope and encouragement as well” Participant R.

“I have hope that things will change one day, that things will change in our organisation and our country, I’ve got hope for social workers” Participant K.

“I have hope for the future... I’m hopeful that in future social workers will be recognized, as a profession, just as a lawyer, engineer or a doctor; the same kind of recognition” Participant D.

There were distinct beliefs that even though the situation for social workers at the moment may not be ideal, but there was distinct hope that experiences and situations will change and improve. The notion of the ability to learn and improve oneself systemically also gave way to feelings of optimism and hope.

Emotions that were still mentioned by participants but showed lower mentions than the previous recalls were surprise and happiness.

“I am more happy than sad I have forever been a person that wanted to see other people be happy. That is important to me.” Participant A.

“I feel happy because I’m doing something that I like” Participant D.

Spontaneous mentions of satisfaction, contentment and passion were also recalled.

“Goodness you didn’t say passion but...I just want to turn the world around...that I get frustrated if I don’t, if I’m not able to do that” Participant N.

“I might say mostly I feel content and confident in what I do. I really believe in what I do, I feel that I can change people’s perspectives within their context” Participant O.

“Satisfaction too, when you have walked a path and you know you have made a difference that’s very rewarding. Making a difference is my dominant emotion...” Participant T.

4.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an overview of the narratives and work experiences of twenty social workers, within child and family protection services. It was evident that these social workers experience an abundance of challenges and difficulties and are often overworked, despondent and exasperated. Yet just as daisies burst out of dry arid areas, so do the social workers find a sense of achievement, wonderment and satisfaction in the poorest of conditions. Three of the participants had been in the field for over 25 years and persevered through the tough times for the reward and passion for helping the voiceless in society. In the face of adversity these social workers still managed to find satisfaction in helping others, and this remained their key driver.

However it is clear that there are a number of factors at play that are capable of tipping the balance to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. There are a number of negative factors that are as a direct result of poor fiscal assistance, these are unfortunately often out of the control of the social workers, management and board appointments. However as many of the social workers pointed out the lack of understanding of the strains of their job and the lack of creative ways to ensure increased incentives, without

increased remuneration ultimately contributes enormously to decrease job satisfaction levels.

The following chapter will now serve as a conclusion of the empirical findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of antecedent factors relating to job satisfaction among South African social workers, working in an NGO setting. Without a clear understanding of what contributes to job satisfaction and what factors negate or impede satisfaction, there is no hope of implementing meaningful reform to ensure increased retention of social workers. This research could not occur at a more crucial time in the history of South African social work. On the 19th September 2016 over 20 000 social workers and auxiliary workers marched to the Union Buildings to present a memorandum of demands to the Minister of Social Development, Bathabile Dlamini and the presidency. The main grievances cited various examples of poor working conditions and low remuneration.

The dire necessity of conducting this research emanates from the fact that social work in South Africa is regarded as a scarce and critical skill. Significant shortages of social workers in this country are apparent, yet there still appears to be little understanding of both the push and pull factors when it comes to attrition and retention of social workers (Baldauf, 2007; Earle, 2008; Earle, 2009; Khumalo, 2009; Moloi, 2012; Waters, 2013).

The goal of offering a detailed understanding of the perceived contributing factors impeding job satisfaction among social workers in an NGO setting was achieved through the implementation of four primary research objectives, as outlined below

- Contextualising, describing and interrogating generic job satisfaction theories.

- Analysing the theory and existing research relating to unique elements of job satisfaction among South African social workers based in an NGO setting.
- Extrapolating information from the qualitative study to reveal key contributing factors impeding job satisfaction of South African social workers in an NGO setting.
- This final chapter will serve as an achievement of the final research objective, by offering conclusions and recommendations pertaining to antecedent factors to job satisfaction of South African social workers.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations discussed in this chapter are based on the results of the empirical findings outlined in chapter four. The layout of the conclusions as well as the recommendations will follow the same structural layout as chapter four. The recommendations are aimed at the social work profession, and key role players in social welfare in South Africa.

5.2.1 Biographical information

All twenty respondents were social workers, working within an NGO setting that focussed on child and family protection services. Only social workers that had been working for a period of more than two years were sampled. Over half of the sample had been working in the field for between two to five years. A large majority of the participants were female.

5.2.2 Situational factors

Situational factors that contributed to job satisfaction include caseload, working conditions, remuneration, promotion and specialization as well as stress.

5.2.2.1 Caseload

The study determined that the overwhelming number of participants in the study perceived the caseload to be gruelling and utterly overwhelming. Large caseloads left the participants feeling physically and emotionally overwhelmed and filled with despair. Voluminous caseloads created a cycle beginning with feelings of lack of accomplishment on the part of the social worker, followed by lowered motivation and in some cases desire to leave the profession. Undoubtedly this cycle exacerbated the dilemma for the remaining social workers as they were then tasked with an even larger caseload. The participants in the study showed an intense keenness to do their job well, but were just unable to provide meaningful interventions to clients with exorbitant caseloads. Ultimately the client suffers as the participants stated there were gaps in the level and quality of interventions offered merely as a result of time constraints.

Added to the burden of prolific caseloads were significant bureaucratic delays emanating from court proceedings that required even further intervention and time. Indications were that requirements to obtain a Form 30 for a foster care placement, was taking up to 2 years in some cases. Not only did this add to the already overburdened welfare system but also the legal system. Ultimately the most concerning part of this was the critical effect this has on the child in need. Delays in registering places of safety also wreaked havoc with the social workers already hectic time schedule as they spent an enormous amount of time trying to find acceptable placements when children were removed.

Recommendations

- Government must institute clear and distinct short-term as well as long-term goals with the intention of ultimately decreasing caseloads at all levels to ensure meaningful and quality interventions.

- Government funding for welfare interventions should receive more priority, bearing in mind that the social upliftment of our society is a fundamental to creating an equal society.
- Although budgetary constraints play a significant role in large caseloads, it is pertinent to note that the long term cost to society of high attrition rates of social workers and lowered quality interventions may in fact ultimately be much higher financial costs. Spending money to create more posts and spreading the work-load in the short term, may ultimately save money in the long term.
- It is essential that bureaucratic delays are formally probed, understood and eradicated. The efficacy of the divisions that issue Form 30 clearance certificates, as well as registration of places of safety should be thoroughly investigated. Suppression of bureaucratic delays would significantly ease the burden for social workers as well as ease pressure within the court system.
- Social workers are being utilised in non-professional tasks, this deprives them the opportunity of conducting therapy and more rewarding interventions. More efficient use of administration staff as well as auxiliary social workers should be encouraged to ease the burden of social workers.

5.2.2.2 Working conditions

Social workers interviewed expressed concern over their working conditions in general. Vehicle shortages sabotaged productive and efficient working processes. Limited access to vehicles also created a knock on effect of increasing tension between co-workers in NGOs. Simultaneously poorly maintained vehicles added to significant safety factors for social workers.

Safety factors were of considerable concern to the social workers with perceived dangers emanating from the area in which the office space was situated, to travelling to unsafe areas (often in poorly maintained vehicles) to family interventions that turned violent. It was clear that the police do not

have the manpower or time to offer the necessary protection for social workers. Concurrently there was little understanding of the safety factors among management in the NGOs; the social workers claimed to have been offered limited support in dealing with trauma themselves, and no debriefing was offered in the aftermath of violent altercations. This lack of perceived support from management encouraged a disinclination to report abuse and an increased likelihood that social workers subliminally feel they are at fault for finding themselves in a tenuous situation.

It is probable that the global recession has played a role in even lower levels of funding and fewer resources: mention was made of a belief of decreased resources, namely stationery shortages, increased electricity cut offs, problems with internet access, phones, computers and printers. Participants narrated experiences of heightened stress in relation to producing relevant court documents with scant office resources. In a similar vein lack of office space presented numerous challenges with regards to client-social worker rapport. Few offices had sufficient private interviewing space, which ultimately impedes the client social worker relationship.

Recommendations:

- There is a distinct need for creative solutions to assist with overcoming obstacles related to poor resources.
 - Explore options such as increased co-ordination between NGOs: either share resources or order in bulk to ultimately decrease costs. An example could be bulk orders of stationery, furniture, office equipment, electronic equipment and possibly even vehicles.
 - Similarly there is a need for creative measures to ensure private space for client social worker interventions. Use of dry walling to create separate offices, use of renovated containers etc.
- Although many of the interventions would require budgetary assistance, which many of the NGOs do not have, it is imperative that

the board and management have a keener understanding of the impact on social workers. Better communication may enable the board to understand the dire needs of the social workers and if there were any discretionary funds, allocations could be made to ease the burdens on social workers.

- Similarly increased financial autonomy should be given to management to ensure there are budgetary provisions for day-to-day incidental costs.
- All NGOs should have clear protocols for dealing with social workers' exposure to violence and vicarious trauma. Part of the plan should include sourcing trauma counsellors that would be available and willing to offer free or cost effective debriefing sessions to social workers.
- An urgent revision of the funding policies for NGOs by government is imperative. Government funding of NGO statutory work is clearly insufficient and unsustainable.

5.2.2.3 Remuneration

Remuneration was regarded by the participants in the study as disproportionate to the qualifications obtained as well as the amount of work done. Lowered remuneration ultimately decreased self-esteem and had a profound effect on motivation levels and overall job satisfaction. Low salaries placed immeasurable strain on family responsibility, specifically for those that were main breadwinners or single parents. Inability to provide for their children on the most basic levels including schooling and medical aid increased stress levels considerably.

Considerable attention was paid to the notion of disparity between DSD social workers and NGO social workers in terms of both benefits and overall remuneration.

Recommendations

- Increased pressure should be placed on government to ensure complete recompense parity between DSD social workers and NGO social workers. This should include not only parity in terms of basic salary but also in terms of added benefits such as medical aid, pension, provident funds etc.
- Concomitantly salary parity between DSD and NGOs would free some much needed funds for additional resources within NGOs, as extra fundraising budget allocated for social worker top up salary could go towards increased resources.
- It is crucial to consult the SACSSP as well as other relevant bodies to ensure there is a more unified voice for social workers to assert the necessity for improved working conditions and remuneration. Increased public relations and marketing would also have to occur concurrently to ensure there is a greater public demand for change in the social work sector. Creative ways to expose the greater public to this is essential.
- Encouraging boards and management structures to provide unique and creative solutions to added benefits. These could be decided upon jointly with staff members. Options could include
 - Increased leave days
 - Sabbaticals
 - Long service leave
 - Study leave
 - More tax efficient methods of remuneration
 - Retention bonuses
 - Flexible hours
 - Increased autonomy
- A change in mind shift regarding allocating budget for staff interventions. Board members should be reminded that spending smaller amounts to ensure staff satisfaction would go a long way towards increased productivity and retention.

5.2.2.4 Promotion and specialisation

The study revealed that perceptions prevail of limited opportunities for upward mobility within NGOs. Lack of challenge, opportunities or advancement ultimately results in acute frustration, lowered self-esteem, decreased motivation and slow but ultimate withdrawal from the job process.

Postgraduate qualifications brought little opportunity for advancement or increased salary, however there was still a stated need for increased specialisation from fourth year level. Many participants felt unprepared for their first job and believed if greater specialisation occurred at final year level, not only would the social worker feel more prepared, but also more self confident.

There was a palpable desire for increased knowledge: a yearning for more training. This correlates with participants' professional development of unique niche fields that they developed on their own accord, not at the behest of the organisations they worked for. This unique specialisation led to feelings of enrichment, challenge and increase self-esteem and motivation. The resultant effect was energised and motivated social workers

Recommendations

- Explore options of specialisation at fourth year level.
- Create spaces within NGOs that allow unique niche fields to develop, even if this involved co-ordination between different NGOs. This could include areas such as bonding therapy, mediation, development of parenting plans, play therapy, assessment etc.
- Increased pressure to offer not only widened opportunities for promotion but incremental salary shifts and or benefits with this. As mentioned earlier, if budgetary constraints do not allow for increased salary, negotiations with staff members to create workable and unique non-monetary benefits.

5.2.2.5 Stress

Stress is a significant contributor to ill health worldwide, however the stress associated with a highly emotive job such as social work is insidious. In addition to mammoth caseloads, court proceedings and financial worries produced extraordinary stress levels. Social workers mentioned being unable to switch off at home and enjoy much needed family time. The participants reported having constant fears of children within their statutory care succumbing to physical or emotional injuries by abusers; these fears were so significant participants reported constant invasion of these thoughts during their leisure time. Added to this, significant mentions pertained to expectations of working after hours during times of crises. This also included numerous mentions of administration work being brought home to do after hours in an attempt to be in control of the workload. The constant eroding of personal time exacerbates the situation, creating a spiral of increased stress.

Social workers reported both physical and emotional side effects of stress. Physical side-effects included insomnia and pervasive headaches. Emotionally, participants reported being constantly in flight or fight mode with secondary effects being impatience and frustration with family members, clients and co-workers.

Only a few social workers voluntarily stated they had unique coping mechanisms.

Recommendations

- It essential to have regular and well-organised wellness programmes that focus intensely on stress levels.
- Stress should be openly discussed in the workplace enabling early identification of high stress levels and easy access to help. The gravity of stress needs to be acknowledged.

- In light of this, consideration of establishment of Employee Assistance Programme co-ordinated and shared across NGOs, or possibly as a public private partnership, should be explored.
- Stress should be reframed and a change of outlook within the workplace is required: if it still remains taboo to speak about stress and it is seen as a weakness, no change will occur.
- An acknowledgment that according to law it is required that occupational health and safety needs to be assessed and acknowledged in the workplace, this does not exclude stress.

5.2.3 Social processing factors

5.2.3.1 Supervision

There was an overwhelming acknowledgement of the significant benefits of supervision. In fact those that received regular and quality supervision all affirmed positive influences on their stress levels and ability to offer a reputable intervention to clients. However, numerous mentions were made of a lack of time for regular supervision sessions: in worst cases, mentions were made of annual supervision. Overall there was a belief that irregular supervision sessions did not emanate from uncaring supervisors, but rather supervisors that were overwhelmed and inundated with work. In fact it was noted that little support was given to the supervisors, in essence offering diminutive emotional support for the carer.

Cost of erratic supervision was multi-dimensional: it decreased social worker's confidence in decision making during the process of removal of children, created a cycle of increased stress and lowered motivation, culminating in an ultimate desire to leave the profession that was apparent among many of the participants. This ultimately placed the child at unnecessary risk, but also substantially placed the social worker at risk.

Lack of supervision robs the social workers of improvement, identification of key strengths and highlighting achievements, as well as creating a cathartic process where they are able to off load emotionally. Participants in the study often cited the need for external debriefing or therapy. Although this concept of restorative function of supervision in social work, (which enables the restoration of emotional energy for the social worker) is mentioned, there appeared to be apprehension on the part of the participants if this could be done adequately in the context of the NGO. Mention was made of the need for an external person to offer this form of emotional restoration.

Recommendations

- In order to increase satisfaction levels and ultimately increase retention of social workers, it is essential to reprioritise the importance of supervision.
- Increased training and support for supervisors is essential.
- Group supervision, in a panel form was deemed beneficial in helping the participants make sound decisions regarding challenging children's court cases. Within this context the option of role-play could be explored in preparation for difficult court proceedings. This would enhance confidence, ease anxiety and allow a safe place to practice assertiveness.
- External debriefing and counselling should be offered as a form of restorative supervision. This would allow the social worker enough space to discuss and off load very personal information. This could be tied in with the option of exploring the establishment of an EAP that is shared among NGOs or a public private partnership.

5.2.3.2 Co-worker relationships

Participants within the study made reference to the intense closeness and camaraderie among many of the workers. These participants regarded their peers as their safety net, citing the fact that few people, apart from co-

workers truly understand the stresses and strains of the job. Mention was made of tea time and lunch time as being sessions of informal debriefing.

The use of humour was integral to easing the tension and increasing *esprit de corps* among social workers. Many of the participants made reference to their co-workers being analogous to a family rather than merely work colleagues.

One of the significant contributors to lowered support from co-workers was the notion of the lack of resources eroding co-worker support.

Recommendations

- Increased budget allocation and effort should be made for team building days and exercises.
- Increased conflict resolution strategies to manage low resources such as vehicles.
- Board members and those controlling budget should be trained and made aware of the benefits of positive co-worker relationships on motivation levels, stress relief and burnout prevention. This would enable the board to understand the importance of prioritising finances for these activities.

5.2.3.3 Leadership and NGOs

Relations with board members appear to be strained in many of the cases. Intense frustrations were expressed over the lack of financial transparency on the part of the board. References were made of the board refusing to discuss financial issues, as there was a perception that social workers lacked the financial acumen to understand the financial statements. Not only did this have the effect of excluding the social workers from financial decision-making, but also it undermined the social workers abilities and intelligence.

Similarly, complaints were made that the board members had little to no understanding of the complexities of the emotional strain that the job placed upon social workers, offering little financial support for stress relief, training and general emotional support.

Lack of creativity in terms of alternate measures to reward staff without financial compensation was noted. Participants understood that financial constraints did not allow increased remuneration but an absence of verbal acknowledgement eroded their motivation levels even further. Time and time again participants concurred that small affirmations, that in fact did not require a huge amount of effort, would go a long way to increase satisfaction levels. The overwhelming response was that financial constraints should not discourage the board from exploring new options to show appreciation.

However at the same time it should be noted that board members appear to avoid spending money on staff enhancement. The perception that discretionary NGO money should be funnelled into poverty alleviation only, and not spent on staff is counter-intuitive to offering valued and worthy interventions to the clients on the ground. It is apparent that on the whole board members do not understand the complexities of spending money to increase satisfaction and ultimately increased productivity.

Lines of communication from social workers to the board were mentioned as areas of concern. In fact it was compared to 'broken telephone' with few channels to voice concerns directly to the board. A clear hierarchy of communication has been established leaving social workers feeling disregarded and uncertain if their concerns actually are being voiced.

Recommendations

- It is essential that the board members have a deeper understanding of the emotional strain placed upon social workers. Concomitantly the board should be enlightened to the correlation between increased emotional support and increased staff retention and productivity.

- Possibly space should be given for social workers to explain to the board in their own words the emotional strain and stresses that they face on a daily basis.
- Tying in with this it is essential that more appropriate lines of communication need to be established between the board members and the social workers.
- Discretionary spending should be funnelled towards training, wellness programmes and debriefing for social workers.
- Increased financial autonomy should occur at management level. Management should be given the leeway to make certain decisions regarding training or essential resources rather than wait weeks for the board to meet and finalise decisions.
- Along the same vein possibly the director or manager should have the same authority as a board member so that they are not intimidated to bring issues to the fore during board meetings.
- Increased affirmation is imperative. Verbal recognition of the amount of work done could significantly increase motivation and satisfaction among the social workers. Targeted interventions that entail letters of commendation or thanks would require small effort yet may in fact play a significant role making the social workers feel appreciated and understood.

5.2.3.4 Collective image of social work

Mention was made of the lowly image of social work, very specifically among the legal fraternity. In fact social workers mentioned the fact that they had the perception that they were often treated worse than criminals in the justice system. Social workers' reputation is so contemptible that their expertise is often dismissed or not acknowledged.

Concerns were also raised regarding government bodies' impressions of social workers. There was a perception among participants in the study that

the DSD treat NGOs in an authoritative and draconian manner, which served to taint the working relationship between these two arms.

Recommendations

- Steps must be taken to repair the relationship between DSD and NGOs. On this note if recompense parity occurred between DSD and NGO statutory social workers there may be a more equal and collaborative approach between the social workers.
- Senior government officials that make derogatory comments about social workers must be brought to task as they serve the purpose of perpetuating the misperception that social work is a substandard profession.
- More input and public relations are needed from a collective body (such as SACSSP) to reframe and rehabilitate the image of social work. An example of this is the recent march to the Union Buildings and the memorandum recently presented to the DSD. However further work needs to be done, this can only be done through a multi-pronged approach:
 - Government officials need to place greater emphasis and respect of the long-term societal benefit of quality welfare interventions.
 - More respect and a collaborative approach need to be instilled between NGOs and DSD. Task teams should be set up to deal with these interactions.
 - Need for pedagogic intervention and participative management to train budding social workers to be assertive, and to reframe the image of social work.
 - Need for intervention within the legal fraternity. Task teams need to explore how two-way communication can be opened in a collaborative approach between social workers and Presiding Officers of Children's Court. This needs to occur through an independent body that has a perceived authority to

intervene. The authoritative and derogatory manner in which social workers are at times treated in court cannot continue.

- SACSSP needs to work more on public relations and marketing to ensure the establishment of an improved collective image.
- Social workers themselves need to carry the flame, however this can only be done with the support of all of the above-mentioned players.

5.2.4 Dispositional factors

5.2.4.1 Resilience and empathy

The results of the study showed that prior personal challenges had positively enhanced the participants' ability to understand and have empathy with clients. The resilience of the social workers themselves embedded a deep sense of belief that everyone has the ability to overcome challenges and learn from emotional and social experiences. This was clearly seen as a significant contributor to making the client feel understood and accepted. There was a palpable passion to understand, act upon and improve the lives of those disempowered in our society.

Recommendations

- Ongoing supervision that reminds social workers of their own innate resilience.
- Utilisation of EAPs or private therapy to enable social workers to deal with their own unresolved conflicts, and this in turn will increase resilience and empathy.

5.2.4.2 Desire for change

The study served the purpose of understanding the deep satisfaction felt on the part of the participants when they believed they had generated a difference in peoples' lives. Enormous reward emanated from feeling that the social worker may have contributed in some small way to making life easier for others, as well as enabling clients to find their own unique direction in life.

Recommendations

- This deep sense of satisfaction can only occur if social workers are able to find the time to offer quality interventions to more clients in this manner. Significant efforts have to be made to create more positive working conditions and ensure increased satisfaction.
- More time and effort and training needs to be given to social workers so that they can be the voice for the voiceless.
- Supervision is crucial in enabling and reminding the social workers of the positive change that has been made in specific cases.

5.2.4.3 No personal disposition

Albeit only a minority, some of the participants stipulated that they only chose social work as it remained the only degree they were accepted into, or could get funding for. This initial lack of passion may ultimately decrease the motivational and satisfaction levels of social workers.

Recommendations

- Acceptance into the Bachelor of Social Work and financial assistance for this tertiary qualification should be made on the basis of both academic achievement as well as dispositional characteristics. Those that offer bursaries should be especially cognisant of this.

5.2.5 Interactive factors

The study served the purpose of exploring how many different factors influence each other to culminate in the creation of impediments to overall job satisfaction levels. It was clear that the combination of situational, social processing as well as dispositional factors all weave together in a complex symbiotic way that ultimately created a satisfied or a dissatisfied worker.

5.2.5.1 Compassion fatigue versus compassion satisfaction

The study examined how ultimately the experience of either compassion satisfaction or burnout appears to be a continuum that is influenced by a complex interplay of factors. The feeling of compassion satisfaction is a key driver to overall job satisfaction within the social work arena, however this can only be realized if the balance between situational, social processing and dispositional factors are skewed towards the positive. Many of the participants felt enormous reward from being able to give sufficient time to clients to institute meaningful change. The participants showed a deep desire to stay in the career despite many adversities, however this could only occur if the social worker was given enough space to allow the social worker to do his/her job well: the benefits of compassion satisfaction should kick in.

Concomitantly it is apparent that compassion satisfaction can only take place if the balance between the different areas does not swing too intensely to the negative. Participants noted experiences where they are not given organisational support, irregular and erratic supervision, and work overload. This led to feelings of anxiety and inability to complete tasks, which ultimately created a cycle of low motivation levels, depression and lowered job satisfaction levels. Despite these melancholic feelings or frustration, some participants conveyed feelings of indifference and severe burnout.

Recommendations

- Significant contributors to compassion satisfaction need to be ensured, they are
 - Manageable caseload.
 - Regular and quality supervision.
 - Hands on approach to resource allocation.
 - Regular and targeted affirmation given to social workers.
 - Creative ways to ensure increased remuneration for social workers.
 - Opportunities to expand knowledge and increase specialisation among social workers, to enable more meaningful interventions.
 - Repairing and reframing of the image of social work.
 - Repairing relationships between NGO social workers and board members, legal role players and DSD social workers.

5.2.5.2 Emotions

Emotions expressed by the participants in the study were both powerful and informative. Many theorists believe that emotion, as a measure of job satisfaction, is a powerful inventory of total job satisfaction levels.

The most dominant emotion recalled in the study was anxiety, this ties in well with mentions of severe stress and fear relating to work overload, court proceedings, safety factors and numerous other concerns voiced by the participants. Other negative emotions that were recalled by the vast majority of the respondents included mentions of anger, fear and dread. All of these emotions are linked intrinsically and show an overwhelming fear associated to the momentous task of protecting children at risk.

Similarly a sizable portion of the participants in the study also mentioned feelings of sadness, despair and guilt. A smaller portion of the participants in the study mentioned contempt or disgust, as a dominant emotion. Spontaneous mentions of negative emotions centred on feelings of

disappointment, desperation and uncertainty, not only uncertainty about their feelings but about their future.

Dominant positive emotions recalled by social workers within the study were of courage and hope. There was an overwhelming belief in hope for the future and the ability to institute meaningful change on both a micro and macro level.

Positive emotions that were also mentioned albeit on a smaller scale were surprise, happiness, satisfaction, contentment and passion. It was clear there is a significant element of satisfaction and contentment that emanates from helping others.

Recommendations

- The importance of being aware of emotions needs to be translated to social workers, creating an understanding of the complex neurological decision-making that contributes to the formation of emotion.
- Social workers must be given the right space to open up and share these feelings either in private therapy, supervision, group supervision or team building.

5.3 FURTHER RESEARCH

In the light of the fact that there is much anecdotal evidence of contributors to job satisfaction among social workers in South Africa, but little empirical evidence, it is crucial that the following areas be explored:

- Interrogations of social workers that have left the field; to explore reasons for attrition and possible factors that may have been instituted to ensure retention.
- A quantitative pre and post survey that shows satisfaction levels prior to significant changes occurring within the workplace to assess the efficacy of certain institutional changes.
- A deeper interrogation of total cost to company when a social worker leaves versus increasing salary or appointing extra workers to ease the workload burden.
- A survey that focuses on stress levels of South African social workers. Surveys conducted in Britain show that social workers are the most stressed of all professions, considering the working conditions and experiences of South African social workers; stress may quite possibly be even more significant.
- A deeper understanding of the role of emotion as a measurement of overall job satisfaction among South African social workers.
- Studies that explore the advantages and disadvantages of creating more specialisation within social work academia.
- An exploratory study that creates an understanding of the barriers to positive working relations between Presiding Officers of Children's Court and statutory social workers.
- Studies that explore the role of marketing within social work, with the aim of reframing the image of the profession.

5.4 KEY FINDINGS AND MAIN CONCLUSION

Job satisfaction remains a complex phenomenon that is defined by a symbiotic relationship between many factors. Numerous factors have transitory influential relationships with one another: an interplay of positive and negative factors that play out against each other but often feed off each other.

South African social workers are faced with many of these negative factors: dismal working conditions, exposure to emotionally depleting and traumatic events, yet many still obtain an enormous level of satisfaction from helping others. In order for this dedication to be continued there must be sufficient effort from numerous role players to decrease the negative influences as much as possible. The importance of instituting small yet continual changes cannot be overemphasised. Rome wasn't built in a day, and we need to be reminded that small, seemingly inconsequential, yet continual change paves the way to better working conditions and ultimately greater job satisfaction. Our task is to ensure enough possibilities and opportunities are presented to social workers so that they may continue to offer much needed respite to the millions of South Africans that are in dire need of welfare intervention.

The findings of this research are presented at a crucial juncture in time for social work. It is clear from the recent march by social workers to the Union Buildings; they cannot and will not continue working under current conditions. A statement issued by a representative of the march reiterated how it is imperative for "dignity to be returned to the profession". In an official statement he emphasised the notion of social work as a profession being at a tipping point, he thanked all those that participated in the march and stated: "We have made it and **our profession will never be the same again**" (Solundwana & Menzelwa, 2016:online).

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Annexure A



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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Perceived Contributing Factors Impeding Job Satisfaction of Social Workers in an NGO Setting.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Debbie Joseph (B.Soc.Sci. Hons SW, Rhodes University) from the Department of Social Work at Stellenbosch University. The result of the research will contribute to the fulfillment of a Masters Research Thesis.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you possess the following criteria for inclusion:

- A social worker registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions.
- Practicing social work in an NGO environment, for at least two years, employed specifically in child and family protection services.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the views of social workers in relation to possible contributing factors to job satisfaction, particularly in an NGO setting.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following:

To participate in an individual interview with the investigator at the offices at which you as the participant is employed as a social worker. The interview guide containing the interview questions will be made available to you. The duration of the interview will be approximately 1 hour.

With your consent, this interview will be recorded with a voice recorder.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

By volunteering to participate in this study, there is no physical threat to you. You will be responding to the interview questions in a professional capacity. There is limited risk for emotional discomfort. Information shared during the interview will be gathered with respect for the participants worth and dignity.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The information and insight gathered after interviews with social workers can contribute to the development of a healthier and happier working environment for social workers in an NGO setting. This may lead to a better understanding of possible interventions that will make the social workers' work experience more fulfilling and rewarding.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The involvement in this study comes without remuneration as you will not receive any payment.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of removal of identifying details for disclosure purposes. The data collected

during the interview will be safeguarded in a research file. The data will remain in a secure file and will only be used by the investigator and the research supervisor.

The interview recording and identifying details will not appear anywhere in the research record. You have the right to request to view the recordings. Permission to provide access to anyone besides the investigator and research supervisor will be obtained from the participants.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

To participate in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any consequences. You may refuse to answer questions and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research should circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact;

Principle Investigator: Debbie Joseph (082 449 9000)
debbie@green-hat.co.za

Research Supervisor: Professor Lambert Engelbrecht (084 951 2448)
lke@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development

The information above was described to me by Debbie Joseph, in English, and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Organisation

| |
|---|
| SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE |
|---|

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [name of the subject/participant] He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Annexure B



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY INTERVIEW GUIDE

Perceived Contributing Factors Impeding Job Satisfaction of Social Workers in an NGO Setting.

Researcher: D. Joseph

This interview is about trying to gain a deeper understanding about your job as a social worker. Each job has the ability to be rewarding and challenging in different ways, and this interview is about learning more about your workplace experiences as a social worker. It is important to note that all of your answers will remain completely confidential, and remember there are no right or wrong answers, the point of this study is to understand your experiences; you are after all the expert in this area.

I am going ask you feelings about specific areas of your job, however, if there are any areas that you believe to be pertinent to job satisfaction among social workers, please feel free to bring it up.

I would just like to get a couple of questions out the way first

1. How long have you been practicing as a social worker?
2. How long have you been with this current organization?

Now we will start with conditions within your workplace that are relevant to this particular agency

3. Could you tell me a little bit about your caseload?

4. Thinking about your working conditions, how do you think this plays a role in job satisfaction?
5. What are your overall feelings regarding your salary?
6. What do you think are the major contributing factors to stress?
7. What are your feelings regarding opportunities for promotion and specialization within this organization and the social work field in general?

I would now like to venture into relationships and the role they may or may not have on your level of job satisfaction.

8. Please tell me a bit about your experiences with regards to supervision?
9. Now looking at co-worker relations, what are your major thought and feelings surrounding this?
10. Often in an NGO the leadership in terms of management plays a role in your working conditions. Please tell me a bit about this?
11. Generally speaking, how do you believe the broader society views social workers?
12. In what way do you believe your core personality characteristics have contributed to your career as a social worker?
13. What parts of social work make this job rewarding?

Each of us has differing emotions about our lives, our jobs and ourselves. I'm going to show you a list of emotions and I would like you to tell me which emotions most accurately reflect your feelings about working as a social worker.

Now I'm going to read out a short list of various emotions. Please let me know if any of these fit with your feelings about your job as a social worker? Don't ponder over it too much; often our initial gut reactions are the most accurate. And remember there are no right or wrong answers.

Hope

Anger

Happiness

Contempt/ Disgust

Fear/Panic/ Dread

Courage

Despair/ Sadness

Interest /Wonder/

Guilt/ Shame

Anxiety

Surprise

Any other emotions you would like to mention?

Now please tell me why you believe you have felt this way in your career?

Finally in your experiences and professional expertise, is there anything particular in the area of job satisfaction of social workers that you feel needs to be addressed, that hasn't necessarily been discussed in this interview?

Annexure C



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Approved with Stipulations
New Application

Dear Ms Debora-Ann Joseph,

Your **New Application** received on **19-Nov-2015**, was reviewed . Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **14-Dec-2015 -13-Dec-2016**

Please remember to use your **proposal number (SU-HSD-001820)** on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.

Included Documents:

DESC Report - Williams, Rochelle REC: Humanities New Application

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham REC Coordinator Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)